

Sūrah Hā Mīm al-Sajdah

Central Theme and Relationship with the Previous Sūrah

Like the previous *sūrah*, the primary subject of this *sūrah* also is *tawhīd*. Arguments in support of this belief are mentioned in it and also people who were opposing the Qur'ān's call to *tawhīd* are also warned in it. At the same time, glad tidings of eternal success are given to those believers who were strongly adhering to *tawhīd* in spite of all the hostile activities of the opposing forces. The Prophet (sws) is told that however much a frenzied and foolish attitude his enemies may adopt, he has to remain patient and steadfast. This is the blessed way and in it lies the success of his call.

Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-8): In this introductory part of the *sūrah*, it is explained that the Gracious and Ever-Merciful Lord did a great favour to the Arabs when He revealed the Qur'ān in Arabic as a warner and a bearer of glad tidings for them. As an obligation to this favour, people should have given it due consideration and importance; on the contrary, they are rejecting this blessing in a very arrogant manner and instead of embracing faith are demanding to see the punishment they are being warned of. The Prophet (sws) in turn is directed to tell them that he has communicated to them the belief of *tawhīd* revealed to him; as far as the punishment is concerned, this is not in his jurisdiction; he is a human being and not God.

The believers are urged to seek repentance and show perseverance. They are also given glad tidings of eternal reward. The Idolaters are threatened with eternal doom. Instead of professing faith and spending in charity they do not have any fear of the Hereafter on the basis of their alleged deities.

Verses (9-12): The power, wisdom, mercy, providence and organization so evident in this world bears witness that this world is not the product of a merry maker or the play field or battle field of various gods; it has come into existence through the planning of the all-powerful and all-knowing God. So people who have become oblivious to God and the

Hereafter because of their intercessors and associates they have set up with God are only waiting for their doom.

Verses (13-18): The Quraysh are warned and threatened that if they have become adamant on rejecting the call of the messenger, they should get ready to meet the fate of nations who reject their messenger. Before them, the ‘Ād and the Thamūd adopted a similar attitude; as a result, the torment of God decimated them and the Quraysh should remember that as far as power and majesty are concerned, these nations were far superior to them.

Verses (19-24): The Idolaters who are hopeful of the intercession of their deities should bear in mind that in the Hereafter their ears, eyes, hands and feet will bear witness against them and no one’s intercession will be of any avail to them. On that day, it will become evident to them that the greatest reason for their destruction was their notion that God does not have knowledge of all the deeds of His servants. On that day, all doors of hope will close on them. Their only abode shall be Hell. Even if they seek pardon, they will not be granted it.

Verses (25-29): The leaders and their followers – both of whom had gone astray will be brought together in Hell by the Almighty. They have connived with one another against the Qur’ānic call of *tawḥīd*; on that day, they will witness the consequence of this evil accord. At that time, they will curse one another and the masses who had strayed from the right path will request God to show them those among the jinn and men who led them astray so that they could trample them below their feet.

Verses (30-32): Those who adhered to the truth in spite of all the opposition and conspiracies will be given glad tidings of God’s mercy and favours by the angels on the Day of Judgement.

Verses (33-36): The Prophet (sws) is given assurance that he is the bearer of a grand and noble call. If the ignorant are opposing it, then he should counter their ignorance with decency and forgiveness. Though this is a very difficult task yet this is a very grand piece of wisdom which is acquired only by those who adhere to patience and it is these people who are in reality the fortunate. Hence this is the befitting attitude that he and his companions should adopt. If any breach occurs in this attitude because of Satan’s latent suggestions then immediately God’s refuge should be sought.

Verses (37-40): The argument stated in the beginning of the *sūrah* in favour of *tawḥīd* and the Hereafter is reinforced by certain other arguments found in the world around man. Abhorrence is expressed for those who in spite of these clear verses are opposing *tawḥīd* and the Hereafter.

Verses (41-44): The introductory part of the *sūrah* had referred to the great favour of the Almighty to the Arabs in the form of the Qur'ān. Here it is corroborated in a new style. Besides alluding to the majesty and exaltedness of the Qur'ān, an answer is given to an objection implanted in the minds of the Idolaters by the People of the Book. The real malady of the rejecters is also alluded to.

Verses (45-46): An objection implanted in the minds of the Idolaters by the Jews is answered. The objection was that when the Qur'ān acknowledges the Torah, what was the need of a new divine scripture?

Verses (47-51): People who were making fun of the Hereafter because it was not happening or because the Prophet (sws) cannot give them a date of its arrival are answered. Those who had no fear of the Hereafter because of their alleged deities are warned that on the Day of Judgement everyone will declare their acquittal from these deities. Moreover, sorrow is expressed on the meanness of those who were demanding to hasten the Hereafter: such is the matter of these people that if God even slightly checks them for their misdemeanour, they start groaning; however, when the Almighty gives them respite they start boasting and demanding the punishment.

Verses (52-54): This is the closing section of the *sūrah* in which the horrific fate of denying the Qur'ān is alluded to and a warning is sounded that the signs of the authenticity of the Qur'ān will now manifest themselves in the world within man and that around him. God is watching everything and everything is in His power. Those who are inflicted with doubts will soon see everything from their eyes.

Section II: Verses (1-12)

Text and Translation

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

حم (١) تَنْزِيلٌ مِّنَ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ (٢) كِتَابٌ فُصِّلَتْ آيَاتُهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ (٣)
 بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا فَأَعْرَضَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ (٤) وَقَالُوا فُلُوبُنَا فِي أَكِنَّةٍ مِّمَّا تَدْعُونَا
 إِلَيْهِ وَفِي آذَانِنَا وَقْرٌ وَمِن بَيْنِنَا وَبَيْنِكَ حِجَابٌ فَاعْمَلْ إِنَّنَا عَامِلُونَ (٥) قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ
 مِّثْلُكُمْ يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ أَنَّمَا إِلَهُكُمُ اللَّهُ وَاحِدٌ فَاسْتَقِيمُوا إِلَيْهِ وَاسْتَغْفِرُوهُ وَوَيْلٌ لِّلْمُشْرِكِينَ
 (٦) الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ كَافِرُونَ (٧) إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا

الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُمْ أَجْرٌ غَيْرُ مَمْنُونٍ (٨) قُلْ أَنتَكُم لَتَكْفُرُونَ بِالَّذِي خَلَقَ الْأَرْضَ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ وَتَجْعَلُونَ لَهُ أَندَادًا ذَلِكَ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٩) وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ مِنْ فَوْقِهَا وَبَارَكَ فِيهَا وَقَدَّرَ فِيهَا أَفْوَاطَهَا فِي أَرْبَعَةِ أَيَّامٍ سَوَاءً لِلنَّاسِ لِيَوْمٍ (١٠) ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى إِلَى السَّمَاءِ وَهِيَ دُخَانٌ فَقَالَ لَهَا وَلِلْأَرْضِ ائْتِيَا طَوْعًا أَوْ كَرْهًا قَالَتَا أَتَيْنَا طَائِعِينَ (١١) فَقَضَاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ وَأَوْحَى فِي كُلِّ سَمَاءٍ أَمْرَهَا وَزَيَّنَّا السَّمَاءَ الدُّنْيَا بِمَصَابِيحٍ وَحِفْظًا ذَلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ (١٢)

This is Hā mīm. The Qur'ān is a revelation of the Compassionate, the Merciful God. This is a Book whose verses are explained in the form of an Arabic Qur'an for people who want to know: a bearer of glad tidings and warning. Yet their majority evaded it and they are not paying heed to it. And they say: "Our hearts are obstructed from what you call us to and our ears are deaf from the things you tell us and there is a veil that stands between us and you. So, do whatever you want to do; we shall also do what we intend to." (1-5)

Tell them: "I am but a mortal like yourselves. It is revealed to me that your God is one God. Therefore, turn towards Him in total devotion and seek His forgiveness. And destruction is for these Idolaters who do not spend in charity and it is they who are the real rejecters of the Hereafter." However, those who embraced faith and did righteous deeds, for them is an eternal reward. (6-8).

Ask them: "Do you reject the being Who created the earth in two days and make other gods His partners?" He is the Lord of all the worlds! And He set upon the earth, mountains from above it and placed in it His blessings and provided it with food provisions for all the needy without any exception. This all took four days. Then He turned to the sky and it was in the form of a cloud of vapour at that time. Thus He ordered it and the earth: "Obey the directives whether willingly or unwillingly." They said: "We out of willingness are in your presence." Thus He directed to make them seven skies in two days. And to each sky revealed the obligations related to it. And We adorned the lowest sky with lamps and fully protected it. Such is the planning of the mighty and all-knowing God. (9-12)

Explanation of the Sūrah

حم (١) تَنْزِيلٌ مِّنَ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ (٢)¹

حم is the Qur'ānic name of this *sūrah*. I have alluded to earlier in the explanation of the previous *sūrahs* that all *sūrahs* which are named حم have common subjects. Though grammatically it would have been correct to regard حم as the inchoative (*mubtadā'*) and the succeeding sentence as the enunciative (*khabar*), yet in my opinion حم is an independent sentence whose inchoative is suppressed. I have translated it accordingly.

In the opinion of this writer, the inchoative in تَنْزِيلٌ مِّنَ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ is suppressed. The translation keeping in view this suppression would be: The Qur'ān is a revelation of the Compassionate, the Merciful God. In the previous *sūrah*, it was similarly said thus: تَنْزِيلُ الْكِتَابِ مِنَ اللَّهِ (٤٠:٢) (The revelation of this Book is from God, the Mighty One, the All-Knowing, (40:2)).

The verse succeeding the one under discussion has also explained this. Thus the words are: كِتَابٌ فُصِّلَتْ آيَاتُهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ.

I have already discussed the implications of the word تَنْزِيلٌ at an appropriate place of this *tafsīr*: it expresses thoroughness, diligence and majesty. In other words, this book has been revealed very thoroughly and in a grand manner by the Compassionate and Merciful God. The various aspects of the elaborate arrangement made by the Almighty in its revelation have been referred to at relevant instances of this *tafsīr*.

From among the glorious names of God, the two referred to here are: الرَّحِيمِ and الرَّحْمَنِ. It is evident from this that it is God's attribute of mercy which is responsible for the revelation of the Qur'ān for people in such an elaborate and thorough manner. This fact is also referred to in Sūrah Raḥmān thus: الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ (٥٥:١-٢) (It is the Merciful who has taught the Qur'ān, (55:1-2)), The reason that these attributes are cited here is to pinpoint the horrendous nature of the denial of these people who are guilty of not valuing a great mercy ie., the Qur'ān, and instead of embracing faith are demanding to see the punishment of God the Qur'ān is warning them of. In other words, they are being told that the gracious and merciful Lord revealed to them a great mercy and blessing but because of their wretched nature they are demanding torment instead of

1. This is Ḥā mīm. The Qur'ān is a revelation of the Compassionate, the Merciful God.

mercy from Him. This motif will gradually become evident from the succeeding verses.

كِتَابٌ فُصِّلَتْ آيَاتُهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ (۳) بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا فَأَعْرَضَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ (۴)²

This is the second enunciative after the first and a detail of the mercy and favour of God which He did on the people of Arabia in the form of the Qur'ān revealed in Arabic so that they do not find any difficulty in understanding it. Had this not been the case, they would have objected as to why the Almighty did not send His revelation in their language. Thus in a later verse of this very *sūrah*, this objection is explained thus:

وَلَوْ جَعَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا أَعْجَبِيًّا لَقَالُوا لَوْلَا فُصِّلَتْ آيَاتُهُ أَأَعْجَبِيٌّ وَعَرَبِيٌّ (۴۱: ۴۴)

And had We revealed the Qur'an in a foreign tongue, these people would have objected: "Why were not its verses were expounded?" The discourse in a foreign tongue, and the addressees Arabs?" (41:44)

In the expression لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ, the verb, in my opinion, connotes intention. In other words, what is implied is that the Almighty made all this elaborate arrangement for those who intend to know and understand. As for those who are devoid of any intention to know, all this arrangement is of no avail to them. This style induces and urges the Arabs that they should be eager and enthusiastic about knowing because they were not recipients of any divine scripture and it was the first time that the Almighty out of His mercy revealed to them His book in their own language to teach them.

The words بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا express a second attribute of the Qur'ān: it was revealed as a bearer of glad tidings and warnings. For those who accept it are glad tidings of success both in this world and in that to come and for those who reject it are warnings of a dreadful torment from God. In other words, no one should take the Qur'ān lightly. It is the greatest mercy as well as the greatest torment. Hence those who are bent upon opposing it should full contemplate its consequences.

2. This is a Book whose verses are explained in the form of an Arabic Qur'an for people who want to know: a bearer of glad tidings and warning. Yet their majority evaded it and they are not paying heed to it.

The words فَأَعْرَضَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ refer to the fact that most people have not given the Qur'ān this importance; in fact, they ignored it by regarding it to be something ordinary and are not ready to listen to or understand it. They do not realize that it is not merely the sermon of a sermonizer; on the contrary, it is divine warning and whatever it is informing them of shall necessarily materialize.

وَقَالُوا قُلُوبُنَا فِي أَكِنَّةٍ مَّا تَدْعُونَا إِلَيْهِ وَفِي آذَانِنَا وَقْرٌ وَمِنْ بَيْنِنَا وَبَيْنِكَ حِجَابٌ فَاعْمَلْ
إِنَّا عَامِلُونَ³(٥)

This verse mentions the detail of the evasion shown by the disbelievers and of not listening to the Prophet (sws) and his companions, as referred to by the previous verse: they would remark with great arrogance and haughtiness that their hearts are totally closed to what the Prophet (sws) and his companions are calling them. In other words, they imply that this call has not been able to influence their hearts in the slightest way. This comment is the same as the one the Jews would make. It is cited in the Qur'ān by the words: (٢: ٨٨) وَقَالُوا قُلُوبُنَا غُلْفٌ (They said: "Our hearts have covers," (2:88)). I have already explained the word أَكِنَّةٌ at an appropriate place of this *tafsīr*.

Words to the effect فِي إِسْتِمَاعِ الْقُرْآنِ are suppressed after وَفِي آذَانِنَا وَقْرٌ. The parallel clause مَّا تَدْعُونَا إِلَيْهِ points to this suppression. I have translated this verse keeping in view this aspect. What is thus meant is: Our ears are blind to the Qur'ān you are reading out to us.

The words وَمِنْ بَيْنِنَا وَبَيْنِكَ حِجَابٌ imply that a great gulf of beliefs, ideologies and religion separates them from the Prophet (sws) and his companions; so wide is this gulf that there is no chance of any proximity.

The words إِنَّا عَامِلُونَ point to the fact that when a such wide gulf separates them that no chance of any communication remains then the Prophet (sws) and his companions should do what they want to and they (ie the adversaries) too will do what they intend to without any hesitation. Though not expressed explicitly in words, if the words: بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا mentioned earlier in verse four are taken into consideration, the

3. And they say: "Our hearts are obstructed from what you call us to and our ears are deaf from the things you tell us and there is a veil that stands between us and you. So, do whatever you want to do; we shall also do what we intend to."

word *فَاعْمَلْ* refers to the demand of punishment these enemies used to make. In other words, they are saying that the Prophet (sws) and his companions should bring about the punishment whose warning and threat they are sounding to them in the Qur'ān; otherwise they would in any case do whatever they have in mind.

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ أَنَّمَا إِلَهُكُمُ إِلَٰهٌ وَاحِدٌ فَاسْتَقِيمُوا إِلَيْهِ وَاسْتَغْفِرُوا
وَوَيْلٌ لِّلْمُشْرِكِينَ (٦) الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ كَافِرُونَ (٧)⁴

These verses give an answer through the tongue of the Prophet (sws) to the demand concealed in the word *فَاعْمَلْ*, as delineated above. He is asked to inform them that he is a human being like them; he is not God so that he is able to bring the punishment at their demand or do whatever comes in his mind; he does not have any such authority; however, it has been divinely revealed to him that their Lord is one; no one is His partner or associate; so they should fully devote themselves to Him and should seek pardon from Him on being incriminated with the filth of polytheism till now and turn towards their real Lord; and they should also clearly bear in mind that devastation awaits all the polytheists who do not spend in the way of God and are not fearful of Him because of their alleged intercessors; it is they who are the real rejecters of the Hereafter.

In the expression *لَا يُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ* the word *الزَّكَاةَ* refers to spending in the cause of God. This word is used to convey this meaning in the Makkan period as well. In Madīnah, a specified form of it was prescribed and then the word started being used in this meaning. Here this word is used in its general meaning and it was conventionally used in this meaning in that time.

The overall implied meaning of this answer given from the tongue of the Prophet (sws) is that it is not in his authority to bring about the threatened punishment; only God has this authority; however, his opponents must stand warned that devastation awaits the polytheists who instead of embracing faith and doing righteous deeds are depending on their alleged deities and intercessors.

The repetition of the inchoative (*mubtadā'*) in the sentence *وَهُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ*

4. Tell them: "I am but a mortal like yourselves. It is revealed to me that your God is one God. Therefore, turn towards Him in total devotion and seek His forgiveness. And destruction is for these Idolaters who do not spend in charity and it is they who are the real rejecters of the Hereafter."

كَافِرُونَ has incorporated a special emphasis in it. The sentence does not merely mean that these people are rejecters of the Hereafter; an accurate translation would be: it is only they who are the rejecters of the Hereafter. The consequence of this emphasis is that no one should be misconceived by the fact that there is any worth of their belief in the Hereafter because they believe in it even though with their concepts of polytheism and intercession. It is firmly asserted that those who think that whatever their deeds their intercessors and partners of God would be able to win salvation for them cannot be regarded as believers of the Hereafter; in fact, they are its real rejecters. The reason why this is said with such stress and emphasis is that these people have totally negated God's justice and wisdom on which the Hereafter is based. Others who have rejected the Hereafter have rejected because they think that it is far fetched or that they have some doubts about it; however, these people have totally razed to ground the bulwark of the philosophy of the Hereafter. In the succeeding verses, readers will see that the Qur'ān has clearly called polytheism as disbelief. The reason for this is that polytheism in fact negates all the primary attributes of God. After a negation of these attributes no difference remains between believing in God and disbelieving in Him.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُمْ أَجْرٌ غَيْرُ مَمْنُونٍ⁵ (٨)

In contrast to the warning sounded above, this verse sounds glad tidings that unending reward is only for those people who embrace faith and do righteous deeds or in other words will adhere to the belief of monotheism without the slightest trace of polytheism and fulfill with full sincerity and perseverance the obligations they owe to worshipping God and showing obedience to Him.

Some people have interpreted the expression غَيْرُ مَمْنُونٍ differently. However, the parallels of the Qur'ān reinforce my interpretation. At one place, a similar expression viz. (١٠٨:١١) عَطَاءٌ غَيْرٌ مَجْدُوذٍ is used. Obviously, it means favours which shall never cease.

قُلْ أَتَيْتُكُمْ لَتَكْفُرُونَ بِالَّذِي خَلَقَ الْأَرْضَ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ وَتَجْعَلُونَ لَهُ أَنْدَادًا ذَلِكَ رَبُّ

5. However, those who embraced faith and did righteous deeds, for them is an eternal reward.

الْعَالَمِينَ (٩)⁶

In this verse attention is directed to the signs of God's power, providence, wisdom and *tawhīd* found in the system constituted by the heavens and the earth, and in verse twelve ahead the substance of this discussion is put forth in the words: *ذَٰلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ*. In other words, whoever deliberates on this world with regard to these aspects will be forced to acknowledge that neither did this world come into being of its own accord nor is it a place of entertainment of a merry-maker nor is it the battle-ground of various deities; on the contrary, it has come into being on account of the planning and wisdom of the all powerful and all knowing God. This topic is spread over four verses. For this reason, for the convenience of the readers, I will first discuss each of these verses separately and then present their summary at the end and later try to dispel the various objections that can be raised on it.

Consider first, the first of these verses quoted earlier. It is said: "Do you people deny the being who created this earth in two days and set up partners with Him; it is He Who is the Lord of the world."

The first thing worthy of consideration is that though the verse addresses the Idolaters of the Quraysh who never denied God yet the Qur'ān has regarded their polytheism as disbelief (*أَنتُمْ لَكُفْرُونَ*). The reason for this is that only that belief in God is considerable which takes into account all His attributes, rights and consequences of these attributes. If someone believes in God but believes in Him in such a way that he negates some or all of His attributes, then this belief is not acceptable and is in fact amounts to disbelief. For this reason, the Qur'ān has called polytheism as disbelief at many places, and has explicitly addressed the Idolaters as: *قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْكَافِرُونَ* (١٠٩: ١) (Proclaim: "O you Disbelievers!" (109:1)). Earlier the interpretation I have presented viz a viz the Idolaters being the rejecters of the Hereafter may also be kept in mind by the readers. Both are in fact based on the same principle.

In the expression: *فِي يَوْمَيْنِ* "two days" do not mean two earth days as has been explained at an appropriate place of this *tafsīr*; it actually means the two days of God. A day of God is equivalent to one thousand earth days and in some cases to be fifty thousand earth days. For this reason, the word "day" should be interpreted to mean "phases".

6. Ask them: "Do you reject the being Who created the earth in two days and make other gods His partners?" He is the Lord of all the worlds!

At other places in the Qur'ān, it is stated that the heavens and the earth and their accessories were created in six days. Here, details of this overall span are mentioned as to how much days were spent in the creation of the components. It is stated here that the earth was created in two days. No one was God's partner or helper in this task; in spite of this, the Idolaters set up partners and associates with Him. Even though He Who created the earth is also its Lord and the Lord of all the universe. In other words, He is the Lord of all this because He alone is their creator; however, such is the foolishness of these people that contrary to the dictates of human intellect and nature and without any reason they have set up His partners and associates. It may be borne in mind that the Idolaters of Arabia regarded God to be the creator of the heavens and the earth and in fact everything; yet they still imputed partners to Him. It is because of this very fact that they were reprimanded.

وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ مِنْ فَوْقِهَا وَبَارَكَ فِيهَا وَقَدَّرَ فِيهَا أَقْوَاتَهَا فِي أَرْبَعَةِ أَيَّامٍ سَوَاءٍ
لِّلْسَائِلِينَ⁷ (١٠)

This verse mentions the details of the blessings found in the earth: it is God Who set forth mountains on it. At another place in the Qur'ān (32:10), it is stated that the wisdom behind this was to maintain the earth's balance lest it may have tumbled away with all its creatures. The purpose of mentioning the words: مِنْ فَوْقِهَا (from above them) is that all these signs of God's power are not hidden; they are found on the surface of the earth and can be observed by everyone. In Sūrah Ghāshiyah, attention is directed to the mountains with reference to this very aspect in the following words: أَفَلَا يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَى الْإِبِلِ كَيْفَ خُلِقَتْ وَإِلَى السَّمَاءِ كَيْفَ رُفِعَتْ (Do they not see the camels, how they have been made? And do they not behold the sky, how it has been raised high? And do they not look at the mountains, how they have been set aloft? And do they not see the earth, how it has been spread out? (17-20))

The words وَبَارَكَ فِيهَا وَقَدَّرَ فِيهَا أَقْوَاتَهَا refer to the fact that God placed various benefits and blessings within the earth and also placed in it all types of sustenance.

7. And He set upon the earth, mountains from above it and placed in it His blessings and provided it with food provisions for all the needy without any exception. This all took four days.

It is a result of these blessings that the earth brings forth all kinds of vegetation whose fruits and flowers are of benefit to man and other creatures. It is because of these blessings that man sows one seed and the earth gives him several hundred seeds in return as its produce. A person sows one seed or a sapling and his descendants are able to benefit from its fruit for a very long time. Moreover, it is because of these blessings that the more advancements man makes through science for discovering the potentials of the earth, the more he is blessed with its hidden treasures. It is very apparent that perhaps tools of scientific inquiry may become exhausted but the treasures of this earth will never diminish.

The words وَقَدَّرَ فِيهَا أَقْوَاتَهَا allude to the fact that God will place provisions of sustenance in the earth in proportion to the amount of creatures He has placed in the earth or will place in it. Through man's planning and efforts, these provisions will continue to be furnished till the Day of Judgement. The Almighty has consigned to the earth's custody the sustenance of every creature created by Him, and has also guided man how to extract it.

The words فِي أَرْبَعَةِ أَيَّامٍ refer to the fact that all these tasks took four days. In other words, the time taken to create the earth and setting forth mountains on it and placing provisions within it took four days. This is the total time consumed for these tasks.

The words سَوَاءٌ لِلْسَّائِلِينَ allude to the fact that all these reserves found in the earth are in accordance with the instinctive needs of all the creatures created by God and of the nature of need each possesses for its sustenance. It is not the case that some creatures were created while the sustenance they needed was never provided. Whether on the peaks of the mountains, the pits of the earth or the darkness of the seas there is sustenance found for the tiniest or the greatest of creatures in their environment. A goat lives on grass and for it the Almighty has created grass; a lion lives on meat; the Almighty has not only equipped it to hunt for its needs but also made animals as its preys. It is also very evident that no creature is compelled to develop harmony with what it needs; whatever each receives is totally in harmony with its respective instincts. It is to this reality that the Almighty has directed our attention in the above cited words: it could only have been the majesty of God to have created so many types of creatures and then for every genre and type provide sustenance to it in accordance with its instinctive needs. Who else than God can have the power to do this?

The word سَوَّال is used in this verse in the same meaning as in: وَأَتَاكُمْ (And gave you from everything which you needed, (14:34)). In other words, God provided us with all those things

which were instinctively needed by us.

There is no need to negate the ideology of communism which some people have tried to derive from this section of the verse; I have referred to the true interpretation of this verse, and this alone is our responsibility. Who else than God has the authority to engender the ability in a person to accept and understand the truth?

ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ وَهِيَ دُخَانٌ فَقَالَ لَهَا وَلِلْأَرْضِ ائْتِيَا طَوْعًا أَوْ كَرْهًا قَالَتَا أَتَيْنَا طَائِعِينَ⁸ (١١)

The expression *اسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى الشَّيْءِ* means to “to direct attention to that thing”; “to make an intention of that thing”. It is said that after creating the earth in the afore-mentioned stages, the Almighty directed His attention to the sky which was in the form of a cloud. The cloud refers to dust and vapour particles or in scientific terms can be called nebula. It is evident from this that the sky present at that time was in its rudimentary and unfinished state. This state of the sky was obviously formed in the two days in which the earth was in its initial stages of creation. For this reason, the word *اسْتَوَىٰ* refers to the attention needed to complete the creation of the sky found in its rudimentary state. It is evident from the succeeding verses that in this final stage the Almighty created seven skies from it and subjected it each of them to their laws. It is evident from this that the creation of the sky and the earth began at the same time; however, just as in an expansive building due to various reasons at times one part of that building is focused on for further construction and at times another part, similar was the case with bringing into being the sky and the earth. Thus, the question whether the earth was created first or the sky is irrelevant. The planning of a building necessarily takes place once. The essential material for its construction is provided; though work begins with the foundations and walls, yet before they are complete work on the roof begins; while work remains regarding the roof time comes to plaster the walls; once this is completed, the remaining work on the roof requires to be finished. Once this is accomplished, attention is directed to the floors. In short, the construction of a building has many different and integrated stages, and one needs to reflect on them on this basis.

8. Then He turned to the sky and it was in the form of a cloud of vapour at that time. Thus He ordered it and the earth: “Obey the directives whether willingly or unwillingly.” They said: “We out of willingness are in your presence.”

Though this small example just cited is not commensurate with the huge and expansive nature of the sky and the earth, yet to understand the creation of the sky and the earth this analogous example will be needed to be understood. This is because the Qur'ān has mentioned both of them together in the capacity of a building. At times, the sky is mentioned before the earth, and, at times the earth is mentioned before the sky. At times, one thinks that the roof is made before the floor, and at other times one thinks that the floor has been completed before the roof. The fact is that all these thoughts arise because the earth and sky are not looked upon collectively but rather individually. Readers may content themselves here with these hints. Inshallāh, in the verses 30-33 of Sūrah Nāzi'āt, more details on this issue will be furnished.

The words *وَلِلْأَرْضِ إِئْتِيَا طَوْعًا أَوْ كَرْهًا قَالَتَا أَتَيْنَا طَائِعِينَ* refer to the fact that after creating both the sky and the earth, they were told that they will have to obey God whether willingly or unwillingly; the sky and the earth responded by saying that they are willingly obedient to God. It is evident from this that every object of this universe that instinctively obeys the Almighty obeys Him willingly and not under any compulsion. This is because the Almighty has created the instinct of each object on the mould of Islam. In other words, every object of this universe is Muslim with regards to its instincts. If angels do not disobey God, it is not because they are compelled to obey Him; it is rather because their nature is in such accordance with Islam that they cannot deviate from it.

The style found in the expression *أَتَيْنَا طَائِعِينَ* is very similar to what Solomon (sws) wrote to the queen of Sheba: *وَأَتُونِي مُسْلِمِينَ* (٣١:٢٧). Those who have interpreted this expression differently have been mistaken because they have not appreciated its linguistic style.

It is evident from this verse that the objects of this world which we regard to be non-living and unintelligent understand the directives of their Lord, respond to and follow them are fully aware in extolling Him and celebrating His praises. Thus the word uttered by the sky and the earth is *طَائِعِينَ*, as cited in this verse. Now this word is only appropriate to be used by those who are living and possess intention. If we human beings are not able to understand the way they worship God or are not able to speak to them, we do not have the right to regard them as unintelligent and deprived of intellect; in fact, this is the limitation of our own knowledge. The Almighty understands the worship utterances of each and every particle of this universe, and every particle understands and follows His directives.

فَقَضَاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ وَأَوْحَىٰ فِي كُلِّ سَّمَاءٍ أَمْرَهَا وَزَيَّنَّا السَّمَاءَ الدُّنْيَا بِمَصَابِيحَ وَحِفْظًا ذَلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ⁹

It is evident from this verse that when the Almighty directed His attention towards the sky it was in its very rudimentary form and required finishing touches. This is evident from the plural pronoun in *فَقَضَاهُنَّ* and from later textual indications. It is said that God commanded them to become seven skies

The words *وَأَوْحَىٰ فِي كُلِّ سَّمَاءٍ أَمْرَهَا* refer to the fact that the Almighty revealed to each of the skies the duties it has in the whole system of this universe.

The words *وَزَيَّنَّا السَّمَاءَ الدُّنْيَا بِمَصَابِيحَ* allude to the fact that the Almighty decked the lowest sky with lamps. Here the change of style may be kept in consideration. The previous words were uttered in an indirect style without addressing the entities under discussion; these words are directly addressed. I have alluded to the eloquence found in this change of style at an appropriate place of this *tafsīr*.

The verbal noun *وَحِفْظًا* is meant for emphasis. A precise translation keeping in view this aspect would be: We strongly protected the lowest sky from the incursions of the devils. I have explained this at a number of places in this *tafsīr* and in Sūrah Jinn ahead more details inshallāh shall be divulged. All these tasks were accomplished in two days, and the sum total of all these days comes out to be six. In other words, these verses explain the details of what is stated at other places in the Qur'ān that it took God six days to create the sky and the earth.

The words *ذَلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ* summarize all these details: whoever reflects on this great universe will conclude that it has been created by the planning of an all-powerful and all-knowing God; it has not come into being accidentally; it has great wisdom in its planning, and this planning is from a being Who is powerful and dominant over everything; nothing is beyond His authority; at the same time, His knowledge is all-embracing; each and every thing in the farthest corners of this universe is also in His knowledge; He is also aware of the needs of each and everything and also cognizant of the role they have in the collective system of this universe. If this summary is kept in mind together with the question posed initially: ... أَأَنْتُمْ لَتَكْفُرُونَ بِالَّذِي (do you reject the being

9. Thus He directed to make them seven skies in two days. And to each sky revealed the obligations related to it. And We adorned the lowest sky with lamps and fully protected it. Such is the planning of the mighty and all-knowing God.

...), then the whole discourse would be: "This universe by virtue of its very existence bears testimony that it has been made by an all-powerful and all-knowing God and is under His control only; however, such is your ignorance that by setting up many hypothetical deities as His partners you are rejecting Him." This statement is given in the form of a question to express wonder and disgust. In other words, what is implied is that there is no justification for such foolishness; however, when people lose their senses, then no act of foolishness is beyond them.

Though the teaching which emanates from these verses has been alluded to while explaining the verses, yet since this teaching relates to the basic wisdom of religion, at the end a reminder of this seems very apt:

The first thing evident from these verses is that this world has been created very gradually and with great wisdom according to a specific plan. It is wrong to believe that it was created merely for entertainment without any purpose and will continue or end like this. This elaborate arrangement is an indubitable testimony to it being created with a purpose and if it has a purpose to it, then this entails that a Day of Judgement has to come.

Secondly, its Creator has immeasurable power and infinite knowledge; hence for this task of creation neither did He require anyone's help nor is anyone capable enough to help Him.

Thirdly, the sky and the earth are like a building in which God has placed man. Hence this notion is self-evidently wrong that two different beings control its roof and floor. On the contrary, the harmony found between the sky and the earth bears witness that the all-powerful and all-knowing God Who created them is also controlling them alone.

Fourthly, the all-embracing system of providence found in this world bears testimony that it is created by the powerful and knowing God; no one else is capable of setting up such a system; for this reason, His servants should only plead and implore Him because he is the real being who can harm and benefit others.

Fifthly, this wide system of providence entails that a day come in which people come before the God Who has in fact blessed them with favours and be held accountable for them; those who recognized the obligations they owe to these favours should be rewarded and those who adopted an ungrateful attitude be punished for this behaviour.

Section II: Verses (13-23)

In the succeeding verses, in order to warn the Quraysh the details of the humiliating punishment meted out to some previous nations which rejected their respective messenger are presented. The coherence in the discourse is very evident. Readers may proceed to study these verses.

Text and Translation

فَإِنْ أَعْرَضُوا فَقُلْ أَنْذَرْتُكُمْ صَاعِقَةً مِثْلَ صَاعِقَةِ عَادٍ وَثَمُودَ (١٣) إِذْ جَاءَتْهُمْ الرُّسُلُ مِنْ بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا اللَّهَ قَالُوا لَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّنَا لَأَنْزَلَ مَلَائِكَةً فَإِنَّا بِمَا أُرْسِلْتُمْ بِهِ كَافِرُونَ (١٤) فَأَمَّا عَادٌ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَقَالُوا مَنْ أَشَدُّ مِنَّا قُوَّةً أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ الَّذِي خَلَقَهُمْ هُوَ أَشَدُّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً وَكَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يَجْحَدُونَ (١٥) فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيحًا صَرْصَرًا فِي أَيَّامٍ نَحْسَاتٍ لَنُذِيقَهُمْ عَذَابَ الْحِزْيِ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَلَعَذَابُ الْآخِرَةِ أَخْزَى وَهُمْ لَا يُنْصَرُونَ (١٦) وَأَمَّا ثَمُودُ فَهَدَيْنَاهُمْ فَاسْتَحَبُّوا الْعَمَى عَلَى الْهُدَى فَأَخَذَتْهُمْ صَاعِقَةُ الْعَذَابِ الْهُونِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ (١٧) وَنَجَّيْنَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَكَانُوا يَتَّقُونَ (١٨) وَيَوْمَ يُخْشَرُ أَعْدَاءُ اللَّهِ إِلَى النَّارِ فَهُمْ يُوزَعُونَ (١٩) حَتَّى إِذَا مَا جَاؤُوهَا شَهِدَ عَلَيْهِمْ سَمْعُهُمْ وَأَبْصَارُهُمْ وَجُلُودُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (٢٠) وَقَالُوا لَئِنْ لَمْ نَشْهَدْكُمْ عَلَيْنَا قَالُوا أَنْطَقَنَا اللَّهُ الَّذِي أَنْطَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ خَلَقَكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ (٢١) وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَسْتَتِرُونَ أَنْ يَشْهَدَ عَلَيْكُمْ سَمْعُكُمْ وَلَا أَبْصَارُكُمْ وَلَا جُلُودُكُمْ وَلَكِنْ ظَنَنْتُمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَعْلَمُ كَثِيرًا مِمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ (٢٢) وَذَلِكُمْ ظَنُّكُمُ الَّذِي ظَنَنْتُمْ بِرَبِّكُمْ أَرْدَاكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ (٢٣) فَإِنْ يَصْبِرُوا فَالنَّارُ مَثْوًى لَهُمْ وَإِنْ يَسْتَعْتِبُوا فَمَا هُمْ مِنَ الْمُعْتَبِينَ (٢٤)

So if they pay no heed, tell them: "I inform you of a thunderbolt, like the thunderbolt which struck the 'Ād and the Thamūd. When their messengers came to them from their front and from behind them with the message: "worship none but God," they answered: "had it been our Lord's desire, He would have sent down angels; so we reject the message with which you have been sent." (13-14)

As for 'Ad, without any basis they showed arrogance in the land and said: "Who is mightier than us in power?" Did they not reflect on the fact

that the God who had created them was mightier than they? Yet they continued to deny Our revelations. So, over a few ill-omened days We let loose on them a stormy wind to make them taste a humiliating punishment in the life of this world and the punishment of the next world will be much more humiliating and they shall not be helped there. (15-16)

As for the Thamūd, We showed them the path of guidance but they preferred blindness to guidance. Therefore the thunderbolt of a humiliating punishment struck them also for their misdeeds; and We delivered those who believed and were fearful. (17)

And bear in mind the Day when the enemies of God will be gathered towards Hell; thus they shall be divided into categories. Until when they come near it, their ears, their eyes, and the hair on their skins will testify to what they had been doing. And they will say to their skins: “Why did you testify against us?” They will reply: “God, who gives speech to all things, has given us speech. And it was He Who created you the first time and now you are being returned to Him alone. (18-21)

And you did not fear that your ears and your eyes and the hair on the skins of your bodies would testify against you. Moreover, you further thought that God does not know much of what you do. It is this estimation of yours about your Lord that doomed you and you ended up among the losers.” (22-23)

Thus if they show patience, Hell is their abode and if they seek pardon, they shall not be granted pardon. (24)

Explanation

فَإِنْ أَعْرَضُوا فَقُلْ أَنْذَرْتُكُمْ صَاعِقَةً مِثْلَ صَاعِقَةِ عَادٍ وَثَمُودَ (١٣)¹⁰

The aversion and indifference of the Quraysh is mentioned in verses three and four earlier. This verse while alluding to it says that if they have decided to show indifference, the Prophet (sww) should inform them that if they have made this decision, then he warns them of the punishment of the thunderbolt that was inflicted on the ‘Ād, the Thamūd and other nations who followed their ways. It is evident from the style of the verse that the ‘Ād and the Thamūd are only mentioned as examples. The purpose is to allude to the fate of all the nations which were destroyed for denying their respective messenger. Earlier *sūrahs* describe this fate in detail.

The word صَاعِقَةٌ (thunderbolt) is mentioned as a prominent sign of the

10. So if they pay no heed, tell them: “I inform you of a thunderbolt, like the thunderbolt which struck the ‘Ād and the Thamūd.

punishment through which these nations were destroyed. At other places, I have explained in detail that this punishment was an amalgam of stormy winds from the south, hail, lightning and thunder. Thus the Qur'ān has mentioned this punishment in different words. Here too it has been mentioned through one of its prominent feature ie صَاعِقَةٌ. However, the purpose is to refer to its other components as well that are mentioned at other instances in the Qur'ān and some of them are mentioned in the succeeding verses as well.

إِذْ جَاءَهُمُ الرُّسُلُ مِنْ بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا اللَّهَ قَالُوا لَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّنَا
لَأَنْزَلَ مَلَائِكَةً فَإِنَّا بِمَا أُرْسِلْتُمْ بِهِ كَافِرُونَ (١٤)¹¹

Though the Qur'ān mentions only two messengers – Hūd (sws) and Ṣāliḥ (sws) – that were sent to these two nations. However, the word رُسُلُ (messengers) is used in the plural form for the very reason referred to earlier: these nations are only mentioned as examples. The purpose is to point to all the nations who followed their evil ways and rejected their respective messengers.

The words مِنْ بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا اللَّهَ refer to the relentless and comprehensive efforts undertaken by these messengers viz the presenting the message of monotheism to their people. The challenge given by Satan to lead Adam astray is expressed in the Qur'ān by the words: لَا تَيَسَّيْهُمْ مِّنْ بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ (٧:١٧) (I shall get hold of them from in front of them and from behind them, (7:17)). The Qur'ān here while pointing out this characteristic devotion of the messengers has explained that God, in order to save their respective nations from the trials of Satan, sent such messengers who devotedly and passionately expended all their efforts to guide these people to the truth.

The words قَالُوا لَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّنَا لَأَنْزَلَ مَلَائِكَةً فَإِنَّا بِمَا أُرْسِلْتُمْ بِهِ كَافِرُونَ imply that on the contrary the importance they gave to the effort of the messengers was that they denied their messengerhood. The stance they took was that had the Almighty intended to send messengers He would have sent angels as messengers and not human beings like them; since the messenger sent to them is a human being they are not prepared to accept him. Thus they totally rejected the message (reference is to the message of *tawḥīd*) with which the messenger had come to them. The sarcasm

11. When their messengers came to them from their front and from behind them with the message: “worship none but God,” they answered: “had it been our Lord’s desire, He would have sent down angels; so we reject the message with which you have been sent.”

found in *فَاتَّأَمَّ عَادٌ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَقَالُوا مَنْ أَشَدُّ مِنَّا قُوَّةً أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ الَّذِي خَلَقَهُمْ هُوَ أَشَدُّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً وَكَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يَجْحَدُونَ*¹² is not concealed from those who have a flair for language. They meant that the message with which these people have come to them stands totally rejected by them; in other words, they neither accept the messenger sent to them nor the message he intends to deliver. Hence no one should try to overawe them with bluffs.

فَاتَّأَمَّ عَادٌ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَقَالُوا مَنْ أَشَدُّ مِنَّا قُوَّةً أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ الَّذِي خَلَقَهُمْ هُوَ أَشَدُّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً وَكَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يَجْحَدُونَ (١٥)¹²

This is a brief description of the attitude these people adopted against the warnings of the messengers. The ‘Ād are mentioned first because they preceded the rest chronologically. The verse states that instead of being grateful on the power and majesty blessed to them by the Almighty, they showed arrogance and haughtiness in the land. Their arrogance is called *بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ* (unjustifiable). The reason for this, as referred to at an appropriate place of this *tafsīr*, that it is only justifiable for the Creator and Master of this universe to think big of Himself. It is not justifiable for any other being.

The words *وَقَالُوا مَنْ أَشَدُّ مِنَّا قُوَّةً* explain their arrogance. This is the answer they gave to the warnings of the messenger of God who told them that if they persist with their ways they will soon be seized by God. They said that if their attitude was one which was allegedly taking them to doom then should its consequence be that today they stand unparalleled in might and majesty. For this reason, their contention is that they are not treading the path of doom; in fact, those who are threatening them of this fate are insane and lunatics.

The words *أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ الَّذِي خَلَقَهُمْ هُوَ أَشَدُّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً* answer their aforementioned foolish challenge: had they the slightest sense in them, they would have easily understood that the God Who has created them as well as the whole universe is much much more mighty and powerful than them. Whenever and wherever He wants, He can seize them and there is no one who can stop Him in any way.

The words *وَكَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يَجْحَدُونَ* are connected to the actual discourse and the words *أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ الَّذِي خَلَقَهُمْ هُوَ أَشَدُّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً* in fact form a parenthetical sentence that was meant to instantaneously respond to their challenge. In other words, the implied meaning is that because of their

12. As for ‘Ād, without any basis they showed arrogance in the land and said: “Who is mightier than us in power?” Did they not reflect on the fact that the God who had created them was mightier than they? Yet they continued to deny Our revelations.

arrogance they were not prepared to listen to or understand anything. With great stubbornness they continued to reject the verses recited and the signs shown to them by the messengers of God.

فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيحًا صَرْصَرًا فِي أَيَّامٍ نَحْسَاتٍ لَّنُذِيقَهُمْ عَذَابَ الْخِزْيِ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا
وَلَعَذَابُ الْآخِرَةِ أَخْزَىٰ وَهُمْ لَا يُنصُرُونَ¹³

The words رِيحًا صَرْصَرًا refer to the strong wind that blows in winters in Arabia from the north. It carries with it the winter clouds as well as thunder and lightning.

The expression أَيَّامٍ نَحْسَاتٍ also refers to the very cold winter days in which because of extreme cold everything becomes lonely, sorrowful and dry and it seems that it has been struck by some bad omen.

The verse says that since these people have become arrogant and have shown evasion to the truth, the Almighty in order to make them taste a humiliating punishment in this world has let loose on them strong winds in the desolate days of winter that has totally routed them. In this manner, they stood humiliated not only in the eyes of people before whom they vociferously proclaimed مَنْ أَشَدُّ مِنَّا قُوَّةً (who is greater than us in might) but also became an example in the eyes of other nations similar to them. Moreover, after this worldly punishment they will also have to face another punishment in the Hereafter which will be much more humiliating in extent. This is because this humiliation will be eternal and also take place before all creatures of God.

The words وَهُمْ لَا يُنصُرُونَ refer to the fact that on that day none shall help them. The power and might which they were proud of will also not come to their rescue nor will their deities be of any avail to them while supporting to whom they denied God and His messengers.

وَأَمَّا ثَمُودُ فَهَدَيْنَاهُمْ فَاسْتَحَبُّوا الْعَمَىٰ عَلَى الْهُدَىٰ فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ صَاعِقَةُ الْعَذَابِ الْهُونِ بِمَا
كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ¹⁴ (١٧)

The above verse states that a similar fate was met by the Thamūd after

13. So, over a few ill-omened days We let loose on them a stormy wind to make them taste a humiliating punishment in the life of this world and the punishment of the next world be much more humiliating and they shall not be helped there.

14. As for the Thamūd, We showed them the path of guidance but they preferred blindness to guidance. Therefore the thunderbolt of a humiliating punishment struck them also for their misdeeds;

the ‘Ād. The Almighty opened the doors of His guidance to them but they preferred their errant ways to this guidance. At last, the Almighty humiliatingly seized them too in retribution of their deeds and they were totally routed. It may be kept in mind that the nature of this torment was the same as has been mentioned viz a viz the ‘Ād. I have presented these details in the light of parallel verses at an appropriate place in this *tafsīr*.

وَنَجَّيْنَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَكَانُوا يَتَّقُونَ (١٨)¹⁵

This verse refers to people whom the Almighty secured from these torments. It is the established practice of God that those who profess faith in the messengers of God and adopt a virtuous life after being cautioned by their warnings are saved from torment by the Almighty. This verse refers to the believers among the nations of both the ‘Ād and the Thamūd. At other places of the Qur’ān, it is mentioned that those among these nations who professed faith were secured from torment by the Almighty along with the messenger.

وَيَوْمَ يُحْشَرُ أَعْدَاءُ اللَّهِ إِلَى النَّارِ فَهُمْ يُوزَعُونَ (١٩)¹⁶

After a mention of the worldly punishment in the previous verses, this verse mentions the humiliation and punishment they would face in the Hereafter.

The preposition *إِلَى* after *يُحْشَرُ* shows that the latter word encompasses the meaning of *يُسَاقُونَ* (they shall be driven) or a word of similar meaning.

The word *يُوزَعُونَ* has been explained under verse seventeen of Sūrah Naml. In my opinion, it means that people shall be categorized. Shāh ‘Abd al-Qādir has given due consideration to this aspect in his translation of the verse.¹⁷

The verse says that people should bear in mind when all these enemies of God shall be driven to and gathered around Hell and there they shall be categorized. Each of them shall enter Hell through the specific gate appointed for the particular category they belong to. It is evident from this that different types of criminals shall be treated differently in accordance with the nature of their deeds.

15. And We delivered those who believed and were fearful.

16. And bear in mind the Day when the enemies of God will be gathered towards Hell; thus they shall be divided into categories.

17. See: Shah ‘Abd al-Qādir, *Translation of al-Qur’ān al-Karīm* (Lahore: Tāj Company, n.d.), 791.

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا مَا جَاؤُوهَا شَهِدَ عَلَيْهِمْ سَمْعُهُمْ وَأَبْصَارُهُمْ وَجُلُودُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ¹⁸ (٢٠)

The verse says that when all the criminals are gathered near Hell, it will not be difficult for the Almighty to adjudicate what type of criminal belongs to which section of Hell because on that day no one will be able to hide any of his deeds. The ears, eyes and even the hair on the skin of his body will bear witness to all his deeds.

The word جُلُودُ occurs here in the capacity of a specific after the general. The special bearing of witness of the faculties of sight and hearing is evident because it is these faculties which make a person see and hear; however, there are other limbs of a person also through which he does virtuous or evil deeds. The word جُلُودُ encompasses all of them. It is as if on that day every hair of a person will become vocal to bear witness. This word occurs in the Qur'ān to connote hair of the skin. I have explained this usage under verse thirty three of Sūrah Zumar.

وَقَالُوا لِيُجْلِدُوهُمْ لَمْ شَهِدْتُمْ عَلَيْنَا قَالُوا أَنْطَقَنَا اللَّهُ الَّذِي أَنْطَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ خَلَقَكُمْ
أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ¹⁹ (٢١)

After listening to the testimony of their limbs against them, these people will become hysterical and will censure them for this testimony. The limbs will answer that on that day every thing has been given the faculty of speech; and He who has given this faculty of speech to everything has given them this faculty as well. It is evident from other places of the Qur'ān that on the Day of Judgement everything will narrate its story. The words in Sūrah Zilzāl are: إِذَا زُلْزِلَتِ الْأَرْضُ زِلْزَالَهَا وَأُخْرِجَتِ الْأَرْضُ أَثْقَالَهَا وَقَالَ الْإِنْسَانُ مَا لَهَا يَوْمَئِذٍ تُحَدِّثُ أَخْبَارَهَا (٩٩:٤) (When the earth is shaken the way it ought to be shaken, and the earth casts forth its burdens and man cries out: "What is the matter with her?!" On that Day, she will narrate her story. (99:4))

It may be kept in mind that everything in the heavens and the earth is vocal in its testimony even today because everything is a sign of God and a conclusive witness to man of God's power, wisdom, mercy and

18. Until when they come near it, their ears, their eyes, and the very hair of their skin will testify to what they had been doing.

19. And they will say to their skins: "Why did you testify against us?" They will reply: "God, who gives speech to all things, has given us speech. And it was He Who created you the first time and now you are being returned to Him alone."

providence; however, today only those people are hearing its evidence whose hearts are alive. Nevertheless, on the Day of Judgement, everyone will hear this testimony and everything will confirm this testimony because the impediments found today will be removed.

Though the words *وَهُوَ خَلَقَكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ* could be part of the utterance of the *جُلُود*. However, in my opinion, it is co-ordinated to the actual discourse. The question posed to the *جُلُود* and its answer occurs as a parenthetical sentence within the actual discourse. What is actually said is that on that day their ears, eyes and all other limbs will bear witness against these people. The purpose of presenting this testimony is that when all the limbs of a person will be given the faculty of speech to reveal all his secrets, then how can the witness and intercession of any other being be beneficial to him. The witness of the claimant is sounder than a thousand witnesses. While co-ordinating to this, it is said: *وَهُوَ خَلَقَكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ* implying that people should remember that it is God Who created you the first time and it is towards Him that they will be returned; if they think that their return would be to their alleged deities which they worship, then this is a false notion. How can they who have no say in creation and apportioning matters be the ones to whom people will return and be regarded as their Lords.

وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَسْتَتِرُونَ أَنْ يَشْهَدَ عَلَيْكُمْ سَمْعُكُمْ وَلَا أَبْصَارُكُمْ وَلَا جُلُودُكُمْ
وَلَكِنْ ظَنَنْتُمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَعْلَمُ كَثِيرًا مِمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ (٢٢)²⁰

Some exegetes have interpreted *تَسْتَتِرُونَ* as *تَخَافُونَ*. In their opinion, the meaning is: you do not fear that your ears, eyes and other limbs will bear witness against you. In my opinion, this interpretation is not correct. Here actually a specific style is adopted found in every language: the consequence of a thing is used to substantiate the thing itself. Obviously, if they had some fear they would have tried to hide from them when they were doing some evil deed; however, when they do not hide on this occasion, it only means that they never had any sort of fear from them.

The word *لَكِنْ* in *ظَنَنْتُمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَعْلَمُ كَثِيرًا مِمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ* connotes the meaning of *بَلْ* (in fact). In other words, such was their foolishness that they thought that even God is not aware of many of their deeds what to speak of evidence of the limbs.

20. And you did not fear that your ears and your eyes and the hair of the skin of your bodies would testify against you. Moreover, you further thought that God does not know much of what you do.

وَذَلِكُمْ ظَنُّكُمُ الَّذِي ظَنَنْتُمْ بِرَبِّكُمْ أَرْدَاكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ (٢٣) فَإِنْ
يَصْبِرُوا فَالنَّارُ مَثْوًى لَهُمْ وَإِنْ يَسْتَعْتِبُوا فَمَا هُمْ مِنَ الْمُعْتَبِينَ (٢٤)²¹

Section III: Verses (25-36)

Initially, the fate of the leaders and followers of the disbelievers is depicted: today they have united to oppose the Qur'ān; however, when they face the consequences of this attitude the leaders and followers will become blood-thirsty enemies of one another. Such will be this animosity that the masses will request God to show them their leaders so that they can trample them below their feet.

After this, the fate of those people is depicted who in spite of all this uproar and tumult will remain steadfast on *tawhīd*. The angels of God will come to them with glad tidings that their period of trial is over. The eternal kingdom of Paradise now awaits them.

In this context, the Prophet (sws) is sounded an assurance: he is the one who has brought the most blessed message. If his naïve opponents are not giving it due importance and instead of lending an ear to it are trying to disrupt it, he should patiently forgive this misdemeanour. This gracious behaviour from him will bring great benefit and blessings to his preaching endeavour.

Readers may not proceed to study the verses

Text and Translation

وَقَيَّضْنَا لَهُمْ قُرَنَاءَ فَزَيَّنُوا لَهُمْ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَحَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلُ فِي أُمَمٍ قَدْ
خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنْسِ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا خَاسِرِينَ (٢٥) وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَا
تَسْمَعُوا لِهَذَا الْقُرْآنِ وَالْعَوَا فِيهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (٢٦) فَلَنَذِقَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا عَذَابًا
شَدِيدًا وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَشْوَأَ الَّذِي كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (٢٧) ذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ أَعْدَاءِ اللَّهِ الثَّارُ لَهُمْ فِيهَا
دَارُ الْخُلْدِ جَزَاءُ بِمَا كَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يَجْحَدُونَ (٢٨) وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا رَبَّنَا أَرِنَا الَّذِينَ

21. It is this estimation of yours about your Lord that doomed you and you ended up among the losers.” Thus if they show patience, Hell is their abode and if they seek pardon, they shall not be granted pardon. (The author has not written any commentary on these verses exists – *Translator*)

أَصْلَانَا مِنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنسِ نَجْعَلُهُمَا تَحْتَ أَفْدَامِنَا لِيَكُونَا مِنَ الْأَسْفَلِينَ (٢٩) إِنَّ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقَامُوا تَتَنَزَّلُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَلَّا تَخَافُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا وَأَبْشِرُوا بِالْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي كُنتُمْ تُوعَدُونَ (٣٠) نَحْنُ أَوْلِيَائُكُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا مَا تَشْتَهِي أَنْفُسُكُمْ وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا مَا تَدْعُونَ (٣١) نُزِّلَا مِنْ عَفْوٍ رَحِيمٍ (٣٢) وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ قَوْلًا مِمَّنْ دَعَا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا وَقَالَ إِنِّي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ (٣٣) وَلَا تَسْتَوِي الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ (٣٤) وَمَا يُلْقَاهَا إِلَّا الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا وَمَا يُلْقَاهَا إِلَّا ذُو حَظٍّ عَظِيمٍ (٣٥)

And We deputed on them evil companions; so they made everything from their past and present seem fair to them. At last the declaration materialized for them the way it did for the bygone nations of jinn and men. They ended up among the losers. (25)

And the disbelievers said: "Pay no heed to this Qur'ān. Raise an uproar during its recital so that you may gain the upper hand." Thus We will sternly punish these disbelievers, and give them the worst of punishments for their misdeeds. This is the recompense of the enemies of God ie the Fire. This shall forever be their abode in retribution of denying Our revelations. (26-28)

And the disbelievers will say: "Lord! Show us the jinn and men who led us astray. We will trample them under our feet so that they are disgraced." (29)

Indeed, those who said: "Our Lord is God," and then remained steadfast on it, angels will descend to them, saying: "Have no fear, and do not grieve and accept the glad tidings of the Paradise you had been promised. We were your companions in the life of this world and are also your companions in the world to come. And you will find in this Paradise everything that your souls desire and you will find in it everything you ask for – : as a means of hospitality from a forgiving and a merciful God." (30-32)

And who speaks better than he who calls men to God and does righteous deeds and says: "I am a Muslim?" Virtue and vice are not equal. Requite vice with virtue; so you will see that he who is your enemy will become your dearest friend. But none attain this wisdom except those who persevere and none attain this wisdom except those who are truly fortunate. And if Satan tries to lure your heart, seek God's refuge; indeed, it is He Who really sees and knows. (33-36)

Explanation

وَقَيَّضْنَا لَهُمْ قُرَنَاءَ فَزَيَّنُوا لَهُمْ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَحَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلُ فِي أُمَمٍ قَدْ
خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِنَ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسِ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا خَاسِرِينَ (٢٥)

The verse points to the fact that the dreadful fate met by these people was because they showed indifference to the reminder of God and instead of paying head to the teachings of His messenger did not give them due importance. As a result of this attitude, the Almighty chastised them by deputing on them evil leaders who totally deceived them until matters reached the point when the punishment of the Almighty promised to them visited them the way it visited earlier nations which had shown defiance.

The words وَقَيَّضْنَا لَهُمْ قُرَنَاءَ refer to the established practice of God mentioned in Sūrah Zukhruf in the following words: وَمَنْ يَعْشُ عَنْ ذِكْرِ الرَّحْمَنِ نُقَيِّضْ لَهُ شَيْطَانًا فَهُوَ لَهُ قَرِينٌ (٤٣: ٣٦) (And he who becomes indifferent to the remembrance of God, We depute a devil on him who becomes his companion, (43:36)). These devils are found both among the jinn and men. And when such devils are deputed on a nation because of forgetting God, they do not leave it until God's promised punishment comes upon it.

The words فَزَيَّنُوا لَهُمْ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ imply that these devils highlight the past and present of these nations in such an embellished manner that they are not able to see any shortcoming in their deeds and character, beliefs and ideology. The purpose is to make these nations tread the path they want to make it tread in complete indifference to the reminders and admonition sounded to them by their prophets and the righteous among them.

The word وَالْقَوْلُ in وَحَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلُ refers to the threat of God's punishment sounded by God to nations which rejected their respective messenger and which materialized for every nation which rejected their respective messenger. The punishment meted out to some of these nations has already been briefly mentioned in this *sūrah*.

22. And We deputed on them evil companions; so they made everything from their past and present seem fair to them. At last the declaration materialized for them the way it did for the bygone nations of jinn and men. They ended up among the losers.

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَا تَسْمَعُوا لِهَذَا الْقُرْآنِ وَالْغَوْا فِيهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (٢٦)²³

Though the words الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا are general yet textual indications show that they refer to the leaders among disbelievers who reigned on the Idolaters of Arabia and on whose attitude the previous verse comments. The verse says that to impede the call of the Qur'ān these people teach their ruffians that when they see Muḥammad (sws) reciting the Qur'ān to his people they should not listen to it and also not let others listen to it; on the contrary they should hoot and yell at it to create discord and pandemonium so that Muḥammad's voice is subdued and their own voice is dominant.

فَلَنَذِقَنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا وَلَتَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَسْوَأُ الَّذِي كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (٢٧)²⁴

The verse says that let these people do what they want; the Almighty will make them taste a painful torment, and bring before them the most horrible aspect of their deeds – something which they too have no idea.

Here, it needs to be kept in mind that in this world man cannot fully assess the results of his deeds. Every deed of a person whether good or bad has the potential of affecting others. It is because of this characteristic of a deed that at times a small virtue multiplies and becomes as large as a mountain. Similarly, a vice which may seem very ordinary in its rudimentary stage can end up in great magnitude. When Cain killed his brother Abel, he actually laid the foundation of the crime of unjustified murder and after that whenever this kind of murder takes place it adds to the sin of Cain as he is partly responsible for it by initiating it. It is evident from this that when on the Day of Judgement each person will encounter the results of his deeds, only at that time will he be able to assess the extent of a certain sin he committed. It is to this aspect that the words وَلَتَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَسْوَأُ الَّذِي كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ of this verse point. In other words, at the moment these naïve people cannot assess how much sin they are accumulating for themselves by stopping people from the Qur'ān and by creating confusion in it. It is only when all the results come before them that they will be able to know the extent of loss they have inflicted on themselves.

23. And the disbelievers said: "Pay no heed to this Qur'ān. Raise an uproar during its recital so that you may gain the upper hand."

24. Thus We will sternly punish these disbelievers, and give them the worst of punishments for their misdeeds.

ذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ أَعْدَاءِ اللَّهِ النَّارُ لَهُمْ فِيهَا دَارُ الْخُلْدِ جَزَاءُ بِمَا كَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يَجْحَدُونَ (٢٨)²⁵

The demonstrative pronoun ذَلِكَ refers to the horrible fate they will encounter as referred to earlier. It is evident from textual indications that the expression أَعْدَاءُ اللَّهِ alludes to the leaders of the Quraysh who through their rouses and ruffians were after subduing the call of the Qur'ān. The word النَّارُ signifies a complete sentence. In order to stress the enunciative (*khavar*) the inchoative (*mubatadā'*) has been suppressed. The implication is that this result will be encountered by people who today have become enemies of God and His religion, and it should be clearly understood that this result refers to Hell. In this fire will be the abodes of the leaders of disbelief where they will have to dwell forever. They will get this punishment because they persisted in denying the revelations of God; neither did they pay heed to them nor did they let others pay heed to them.

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا رَبَّنَا أَرِنَا الَّذِينَ أَضَلَّانَا مِنَ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسِ نَجْعَلُهُمَا تَحْتَ أَقْدَامِنَا لِيَكُونَا مِنَ الْأَسْفَلِينَ (٢٩)²⁶

Here too the words الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا are general yet it is evident from textual indications that they refer to the masses that were lured and led astray by their leaders. Neither did the leaders pay heed to call of the Qur'ān nor did, as far as they could, let others pay heed to it. The verse implies that today these people are faithfully following their leaders; however, when they see the fate which their leaders will lead them to they will writhe with anger and request the Almighty to let them catch a glimpse of those among the men and jinn who led them astray so that they could trample them under their feet and as a result teach them a lesson for their arrogance and misuse of power and thereby pacify themselves.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقَامُوا تَتَنَزَّلُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَلَّا تَخَافُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا وَأَبْشِرُوا بِالْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي كُنتُمْ تُوعَدُونَ (٣٠)²⁷

25. This is the recompense of the enemies of God ie the Fire. This shall forever be their abode in retribution of denying Our revelations.

26. And the disbelievers will say: "Lord! Show us the jinn and men who led us astray. We will trample them under our feet so that they are disgraced."

27. Indeed, those who said: "Our Lord is God," and then remained steadfast on it, angels will descend to them, saying: "Have no fear, and do not grieve and accept the glad tidings of the Paradise you had been promised."

After describing the fate of the opponents of the Prophet (sws) on the Day of Judgement, this verse describes the fate of those who accepted the preaching message of Muḥammad (sws) and then irrespective of all opposing forces adhered to it with full dedication and steadfastness. The verse says that on the Day of Judgement before the judgement is sounded angels will visit these people to please and comfort them; they will assure them that their time of trial is now over; they will tell them that neither is there any fear for them nor any sorrow; they should now accept the glad tidings of Paradise which had been promised to them through prophets and messengers.

نَحْنُ أَوْلِيَائُكُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا مَا تَشْتَهِي أَنْفُسُكُمْ وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا مَا تَدْعُونَ ²⁸(٣١)

The implication is that whereas devils were the companions of the disbelievers who at last led them to Hell, angels remained the companions of the believers in the previous world and in this one; the Paradise they will now be blessed with will have everything they desire and also things which they demand.

It may be kept in mind that the angels of God remain with the believers in this world also; they induce them towards virtue and also encourage and strengthen them in the hardships they face in this cause. A person is deprived of this help and encouragement from the angels when instead of valuing it he consigns his reins to Satan. I have written in detail on the help and companionship of the angels in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah Anfāl.

نُزُلًا مِّنْ غَفُورٍ رَّحِيمٍ ²⁹(٣٢)

The word نُزُلٌ refers to the initial meal and feast given to a guest. The implication is that this attention and favour given to them constitutes the first act of hospitality. What they will be given later is only known to God.

وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ قَوْلًا مِّمَّنْ دَعَا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا وَقَالَ إِنَّنِي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ³⁰(٣٣)

This verse sounds an assurance to the Prophet (sws) and censures his

28. We were your companions in the life of this world and are also your companions in the world to come. And you will find in this Paradise everything that your souls desire and you will find in it everything you ask for – :

29. As a means of hospitality from a forgiving and a merciful God.”

30. And who speaks better than he who calls men to God and does righteous deeds and says: “I am a Muslim?”

opponents as well who would say: قُلُوبُنَا فِي أَكِنَّةٍ مِّمَّا تَدْعُونَا إِلَيْهِ وَفِي آذَانِنَا وَقْرٌ (Our hearts are obstructed from what you call us and our ears are deaf from the things you tell us and there is a veil that stands between us and you, (41:5)). In other words, the Prophet (sws) is being told that if these people are not listening to him and in their frenzy of enmity have gone as far as asking people to not listen to the Qur'ān and create a noise and uproar when it is recited, then there is no need to go after them; it has become evident that all the fault lies with them; the Prophet (sws) or his message is not at fault; the message of the Prophet (sws) is that of *tawhīd* of God and to worship Him. What can be a greater message that can be communicated to people; besides this message, the Prophet (sws) himself is also an embodiment of righteousness and also calling others towards it; this is an irrefutable testimony of his genuineness and of the fact that he is not one who wants to create disorder in the land; his words and deeds are in perfect harmony with one another and that he wants to engender virtue and justice in the land; his words are: إِنِّي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ (I am from among the obedient people of my Lord); it is evident from these words that he is not after establishing his political dominance over people; in fact, he wants to make everyone obedient to God. This Islam is the nature of this universe and it is this religion towards which people were called by Abraham (sws) – the person whom these Ishmaelites associate themselves to; if even after these clear testimonies, these people are adamant on opposing him, then he should consign their matter to God. None except God can lift the covers that have enveloped their hearts.

وَلَا تَسْتَوِي الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ³¹ (34)

This verse guides the Prophet (sws) and his companions to the behaviour they must adopt to counter the misbehaviour of his opponents. It is said that good and bad behaviour cannot be equal. There is a world of difference between the effect and consequences of both with regard to their fate in the Hereafter and the objective of preaching. Thus they must adopt that behaviour which is better to face the misdemeanour of these people. The benefit of this behaviour would be that those among their opponents who have some good left in them will become their bosom friends after being influenced by the sanity of their call and decency of

31. Virtue and vice are not equal. Requite vice with virtue; so you will see that he who is your enemy will become your dearest friend.

their behaviour.

What is implied by showing good behaviour against the bad behaviour of the opponents is that though it is permitted to a person to exact an equal revenge for an excess committed against him, yet forgiveness and showing patience is even better. Thus in the sight of God it is better if the righteous adopt this attitude. This guidance is given to the believers in this very context at a number of places in the Qur'ān. I cite below one such verse from Sūrah Naḥl which aptly explains the verse under discussion:

أَدْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ
هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ وَإِنْ عَاقَبْتُمْ فَعَاقِبُوا بِمِثْلِ مَا
عُوقِبْتُمْ بِهِ وَلَئِنْ صَبَرْتُمْ لَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لِلصَّابِرِينَ (١٦: ١٢٥-١٢٦)

Call men to the path of your Lord with wisdom and kindly exhortation and debate with them in the most befitting manner. Indeed, your Lord best knows those who stray from His path and those who are rightly guided. And if you avenge, let this be commensurate with the wrong that has been inflicted upon you. And if you exercise patience, then this is the best way for the patient. (16:125-126)

It is evident from this that although a person has the right to exact revenge on the excesses committed against him by his opponents yet with regard to principles of preaching and reforming the attitude of forgiveness and patience is much better. For this reason, a believer is directed to adopt the attitude which is better.

It should remain in consideration that the believers are directed to adopt this behaviour until the truth is conclusively conveyed to their opponents. If the truth has been conclusively conveyed and in spite of this the opponents are adamant on their opposition and in fact are after destroying the righteous as well as their message, then after a clear declaration of acquittal they can also be taken to task. In this case, instead of forgiving them this would be the better course of action – and in some cases, the only course of action. Thus the very people of Makkah with whom the Almighty urged the Prophet (sws) and his companions to adopt the attitude of forgiveness mentioned in this verse faced the wrath of the companions at the behest of the Almighty after the truth had been conclusively conveyed to them. Details can be looked up in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah Tawbah.

The words **فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ** have been mentioned keeping in view the general nature of a person. When people whose nature has not been perverted see that so anxious is a person in wishing well for them that in spite of their bad behaviour and disrespect for him his graciousness towards them remains the same and in fact he responds to this bad behaviour with prayers for them, their attitude does change: even if because of some misunderstanding they have animosity for him they are deeply influenced by his magnanimous behaviour and their animosity gives way to love and affection and they become his bosom friends. Thus, it is an undeniable fact that the most effective factor in the preaching mission of Muḥammad (sws) was this aspect of his character. Whoever among his enemies had any trace of decency in them were greatly influenced by this aspect of his character and ultimately became his sincere companions and undaunted men of Islam. Only those hard-hearted were not affected by this attitude whose nature had been perverted.

وَمَا يُلْقَاهَا إِلَّا الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا وَمَا يُلْقَاهَا إِلَّا ذُو حَظٍّ عَظِيمٍ (٣٥)³²

The antecedent of the accusative pronoun **هَا** in **يُلْقَاهَا** is not mentioned; it refers to the wisdom which the previous verse instructs Muslims to adopt. Bringing pronouns in this manner is very common in Arabic. I have already discussed this style while explaining the following verse in Sūrah Baqarah: **وَأَنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلَّا عَلَى الْخَاشِعِينَ (٢: ٤٥)**. The verse under discussion says that this wisdom can be attained only by those who have the trait of patience; moreover, this wisdom is not something trivial; it is a profound treasure. Very fortunate are those who are able to acquire it.

Three things are evident from this explanation:

Firstly, what has been said earlier is a great piece of wisdom.

Secondly, only those people can attain this wisdom who have the trait of patience in them. Those who are devoid of patience, are not worthy of being given wisdom. For this reason, those who want to acquire it should deeply inculcate patience in them.

Thirdly, wisdom is not something trivial; it is an abiding treasure; so every man of grit should go all out in acquiring it. Very fortunate and privileged are those who succeed in this quest.

32. But none attain this wisdom except those who persevere and none attain this wisdom except those who are truly fortunate.

وَأَمَّا يَنْزَغَنَّكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ نَزْغٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ³³ (٣٦)

This is the remedy suggested if any sentiment adverse to wisdom arises in a person as a result of mischief played by the opponents and evil suggestions of Satan: he should seek God's refuge. If a person instead being lured away by his emotions sincerely seeks God's refuge, he will be definitely granted it by God, and Satan will not be able to get the better of him. It is God Who in reality hears and sees; nothing remains hidden from Him. When a person with full sincerity seeks God's help against Satan, He is necessarily helped by God.

Section IV: Verses (37-46)

In the succeeding verses, the arguments which were presented in the beginning of the *sūrah* to substantiate the beliefs of *tawhīd* and the Hereafter are further explained; these arguments had been drawn from the world around man. At the same time, people who have deviated from God's guidance and are also trying to de-track others are warned. They are also informed that the Qur'ān is a scripture revealed by God. Those who deny it will cause no harm to God; they will only hasten their own destruction. In this regard, it is also explained that by revealing the Qur'ān the Almighty has done a great favour to both the Ishmaelites and the Israelites. If they do not give it due regard and importance they will bear its evil consequences. The Almighty has conclusively conveyed the truth to them; hence whatever fate they face, they are worthy of it; they shall not face injustice.

In the light of this background, readers may proceed to study these verses.

Text and Translation

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ اللَّيْلُ وَالنَّهَارُ وَالشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ لَا تَسْجُدُوا لِلشَّمْسِ وَلَا لِلْقَمَرِ وَاسْجُدُوا لِلَّهِ الَّذِي خَلَقَهُنَّ إِن كُنتُمْ إِيَّاهُ تَعْبُدُونَ (٣٧) فَإِنْ اسْتَكْبَرُوا فَالَّذِينَ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ يُسَبِّحُونَ لَهُ بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَهُمْ لَا يَسْأَمُونَ (٣٨) وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنَّكَ تَرَى الْأَرْضَ خَاشِعَةً فَإِذَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْهَا الْمَاءَ اهْتَزَّتْ وَرَبَتْ إِنَّ الَّذِي أَحْيَاهَا لَمُحْيِي الْمَوْتِ إِنَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (٣٩)

33. And if Satan tries to lure your heart, seek God's refuge; indeed, it is He Who really sees and knows.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُلْحِدُونَ فِي آيَاتِنَا لَا يَخْفَوْنَ عَلَيْنَا أَفَمَنْ يُلْقَى فِي النَّارِ خَيْرٌ أَمْ مَنْ يَأْتِي آمِنًا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ اعْمَلُوا مَا شِئْتُمْ إِنَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ (٤٠) إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِالذِّكْرِ لَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ وَإِنَّهُ لَكِتَابٌ عَزِيزٌ (٤١) لَا يَأْتِيهِ الْبَاطِلُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَلَا مِنْ خَلْفِهِ تَنْزِيلٌ مِّنْ حَكِيمٍ حَمِيدٍ (٤٢) مَا يُقَالُ لَكَ إِلَّا مَا قَدْ قِيلَ لِلرُّسُلِ مِن قَبْلِكَ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَذُو مَغْفِرَةٍ وَذُو عِقَابٍ أَلِيمٍ (٤٣) وَلَوْ جَعَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا أَعْجَمِيًّا لَقَالُوا لَوْلَا فُصِّلَتْ آيَاتُهُ أَأَعْجَمِيٌّ وَعَرَبِيٌّ قُلْ هُوَ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا هُدًى وَشِفَاءٌ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ فِي آذَانِهِمْ وَقُرْ وَهُوَ عَلَيْهِمْ عَمًى أُولَٰئِكَ يُنَادَوْنَ مِنْ مَّكَانٍ بَعِيدٍ (٤٤) وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ فَاخْتَلَفَ فِيهِ وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَبِّكَ لَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ وَإِنَّهُمْ لَفِي شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ مُرِيبٍ (٤٥) مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ أَسَاءَ فَعَلَيْهَا وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِظَلَّامٍ لِلْعَبِيدِ (٤٦)

And among His signs are the night and the day, and also the sun and the moon. Do not prostrate yourselves before the sun or the moon; rather prostrate yourselves before God, Who created all these things if you would truly worship Him. (37)

Thus if they show arrogance, [let them]; the angels who are with your Lord give glory only to Him night and day and they never get tired. (38)

And from among His signs is that you see the earth totally barren: but when We pour down rain upon it, it stirs and swells. Indeed, He who gives it life will raise the dead to life. Indeed, He has power over all things. (39)

Those who deviate from Our signs are not hidden from Our view. Is he who will be cast into the Fire better off than he who emerges in the shadow of peace on the Day of Judgement? Do what you want. He is fully watching all that you do. (40)

Those who denied the reminder of God when it came to them [have called for their doom]. It is indeed an exalted scripture. Falsehood cannot reach it from before or from behind. It has been revealed in a profound manner from a wise and worthy of praise God. (41-42)

Nothing is being said to you that was not said to other prophets before you. Indeed, your Lord is greatly forgiving as well as very stern in retribution. (43)

And had We revealed the Qur'an in a foreign tongue, these people would have objected: "Why were not its verses expounded?" The discourse in a foreign tongue, and the addressees Arabian?"

Tell them: "It is a guide and a cure for those who profess faith in it." As for those who are not professing faith, there is deafness in their ears

and this is a like a covering for them. Now these people will be called from a far-off place.’ (44)

And We also gave the Book to Moses, but differences were created in it. And had a word from your Lord not been decreed earlier, the matter would have been decided between them and these people are in a confusing doubt from it. He who does good does it for his own soul; and he who commits evil will face its consequences and your Lord is never the slightest unjust to His servants. (45-46)

Explanation

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ اللَّيْلُ وَالنَّهَارُ وَالشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ لَا تَسْجُدُوا لِلشَّمْسِ وَلَا لِلْقَمَرِ وَاسْجُدُوا لِلَّهِ
الَّذِي خَلَقَهُنَّ إِن كُنتُمْ إِيَّاهُ تَعْبُدُونَ³⁴ (٣٧)

In verses nine to twelve of this *sūrah* arguments are drawn from the creation of the heavens and the earth on the doctrines of monotheism and the Hereafter. This verse relates to them. In between the motifs which are brought into discussion in order to sound warring, reminder and assurance relate to these doctrines. For this reason, no disjointedness or disconnection arises. Now while referring to verses nine to twelve it is said that among the signs of He Who is the creator of the heavens and the earth are the night and the day and the sun and the moon. Their alternation and rising and setting bear witness to their subservience. From their very existence, they bear evidence that they are neither God nor his partners in any way; the truth is that the Almighty has fitted them as spare-parts in the machinery of this universe, and at His bidding are discharging the service assigned to them. After this testimony of theirs it is mere foolishness and ignorance to regard them God or His partners. They are neither God nor His partners; they are actually the signs of God's power, wisdom, mercy and providence, and it is not just these who occupy the status of such signs; there are a number of such signs of which they are only a part.

The words لَا تَسْجُدُوا لِلشَّمْسِ وَلَا لِلْقَمَرِ وَاسْجُدُوا لِلَّهِ الَّذِي خَلَقَهُنَّ express the consequence of what is just said: when they are neither God or His partners but are only signs of God and have been made to serve man, then those who worship them not only belittle God but also their own selves. It is only God Who is worthy of being worshipped Who created

34. And among His signs are the night and the day, and also the sun and the moon. Do not prostrate yourselves before the sun or the moon; rather prostrate yourselves before God, Who created all these things if you would truly worship Him.

everything including the day and the night and the sun and the moon and put them to man's service. The word prostration here connotes worship because it is the most prominent manifestation of worship. It is specially stressed that people should not worship the sun and the moon because idolatrous nations have worshipped them in every age. The pronoun in *خَلَقَهُنَّ* refers to all the objects mentioned earlier.

The words *إِنْ كُنْتُمْ إِيَّاهُ تَعْبُدُونَ* express the fact that one can only fulfil the right of purely worshipping God if none except Him is prostrated to. Prostration is the greatest manifestation of worship. Hence it is not allowed before anyone except God. Here it needs to be kept in mind that if the Idolaters of Arabia worshipped other things besides God, it was because they thought that these things are a means of procuring God's favour. In other words, worshipping them in their view was like worshipping god. These words refute this claim: God should be worshipped alone such that no one should even share the specific signs of this worship with anyone.

³⁵ فَإِنْ اسْتَكْبَرُوا فَالَّذِينَ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ يُسَبِّحُونَ لَهُ بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَهُمْ لَا يَسْأَمُونَ (٣٨)

This verse directs the Prophet (sws) to leave these people alone to themselves if because of arrogance they are not paying heed to him and haughtily remark that their ears are deaf to what he is saying and there is a curtain stretched between them and him. God has not the slightest concern for them; the Prophet (sws) too should show no concern for them; if these people do not worship God, it will not the slightest effect His court; the angels that are found in His presence are busy extolling Him day and night and such is their fervour for this that they never get tired. The words *الَّذِينَ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ* connote the angels in their collective capacity; they do not refer to the ones who always remain in the presence of the Almighty. This is because the feature of the angels mentioned here belongs to all the angels. The words *عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ* (near your Lord) are meant to express the nearness the angels have with God with regard to man and jinn. The implication is that if these wretched people are showing indifference to worshipping the Almighty, let them do so; the noble and exalted creatures of God whom these people worship are the ones who do not feel any shame in worshipping God; they are busy extolling Him day and night and their enthusiasm and vigour for this does not diminish the slightest.

35. Thus if they show arrogance, [let them]; the angels who are with your Lord give glory only to Him night and day and they never get tired.

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنَّكَ تَرَى الْأَرْضَ خَاشِعَةً فَإِذَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْهَا الْمَاءَ اهْتَزَّتْ وَرَبَتْ إِنَّ الَّذِي أَحْيَاهَا لَمُحْيِي الْمَوْتِ إِنَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ³⁶ (٣٩)

These verses express a reminder of the Hereafter – after the previous ones had expressed a reminder of monotheism. It is said that those who regard the Day of Judgement to be improbable should observe God's signs in this earth. One can see that at times the earth is totally dry, desolate and barren; God then out of His grace sends towards it clouds of mercy and in the blink of an eye it becomes brimming with life. Its low lying areas swell with greenery and vegetation and every nook and corner of it witnesses the spring of growth and luxuriance.

The words *الَّذِي أَحْيَاهَا لَمُحْيِي الْمَوْتِ* refer to the fact that the God Who continuously gives death and life to this earth is also definitely capable of raising back dead people to life. This is because God has power over all things: *إِنَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ*. If He does not have this power, then He cannot be God.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُلْحِدُونَ فِي آيَاتِنَا لَا يَخْفَوْنَ عَلَيْنَا أَفَمَنْ يُلْقَى فِي النَّارِ خَيْرٌ أَمْ مَنْ يَأْتِي آمِنًا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ اعْمَلُوا مَا شِئْتُمْ إِنَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ³⁷ (٤٠)

The word *يُلْحِدُونَ* means “to deviate” and “to swerve and stray”. The expression *يُلْحِدُونَ فِي آيَاتِنَا* would mean that the verses and signs of God are guiding a person to some other direction; however, because of his ill-ways, stubbornness and divergence he adopts some other way and also tries to turn people towards this way.

Verse twenty five has already referred to these evil efforts of the leaders who had swerved from the path of truth; it is such miscreants who are threatened in this verse. They are told that those who are working such evil are not beyond God's observation; He is watching and listening to everything. In other words, if these people are not hidden from God, then one day God will definitely make them taste the evil they were doing; this part of the discourse is left without any clarification; and

36. And from among His signs is that you see the earth totally barren: but when We pour down rain upon it, it stirs and swells. Indeed, He who gives it life will raise the dead to life. Indeed, He has power over all things.

37. Those who deviate from Our signs are not hidden from Our view. Is he who will be cast into the Fire better off than he who emerges in the shadow of peace on the Day of Judgement? Do what you want. He is fully watching all that you do.

the anger which is concealed in this lack of clarification does not need any words for its explanation.

The words أَفَمَنْ يُلْقَى فِي النَّارِ خَيْرٌ أَمْ مَنْ يَأْتِي آمِنًا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ provide this clarification is an interrogative style. The implication is that when the Almighty is watching all the deeds of people, then whatever attitude they adopt they should after deciding one question: will he who faces a fortunate fate be one who will be cast into Hell or one who rises on that Day such that he will have absolutely no fears? The natural consequence of God watching the deeds of people and having the power to re-create people is reward and punishment. Hence, whoever has to do anything in this world should first decide if his choice is Hell or Paradise? The paths to both these destinations are open to people. A person should adopt for himself the path he thinks is best for him. After delineating good and evil, the Almighty has left people with the discretion to choose between them.

The words اْعْمَلُوا مَا شِئْتُمْ إِنَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ express the liberty and freedom just referred to. After explaining good and evil as well as their consequences, the Almighty has given people the liberty to choose between them; however, whatever they are doing is being observed by Him. The warning found in these words is beyond expression.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِالذِّكْرِ لَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ وَإِنَّهُ لَكِتَابٌ عَزِيزٌ (٤١) لَا يَأْتِيهِ الْبَاطِلُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَلَا مِنْ خَلْفِهِ تَنْزِيلٌ مِّنْ حَكِيمٍ حَمِيدٍ (٤٢)³⁸

The word الذِّكْر refers to the Qur'ān. I have explained at an appropriate place of this *tafsīr* why the Qur'ān is called thus. The subject discussed in the beginning of this *sūrah* is taken up afresh. It is said that people who are denying the Qur'ān after it has come to them, are ... The answer to this is suppressed and there is great eloquence in this suppression. It is evident from this that in order to delineate their fate it is sufficient to merely mention their crime; there is no need to express it in words. They will see the same evil day which before them was witnessed by those who had rejected their respective messengers.

The words كَفَرُوا بِالذِّكْرِ لَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ need special consideration. They are meant to express the gravity of their crime. If a person does not duly value something he has not seen and has not been able to evaluate, then

38. Those who denied the reminder of God when it came to them [have called for their doom]. It is indeed an exalted scripture. Falsehood cannot reach it from before or from behind. It has been revealed in a profound manner from a wise and worthy of praise God.

he can be pardoned to some extent; however, he who denied the Qur'ān after he saw it, was also able to evaluate its inimitability and also had a good idea of the soundness of its arguments is like a person who is denying the brightness of the sun at the very time it is shining over his head.

Two aspects need to be borne in mind regarding *وَإِنَّهُ لَكِتَابٌ عَزِيزٌ*. One of them is the warning sounded and the other one is the purity of the Qur'ān. With regard to the first of these aspects, this expression is related to the subject discussed previously, and with regard to the second of these aspects it is connected to the next verse.

The word *عَزِيزٌ* means “powerful and dominant”; with regard to this meaning, it sounds a warning. In other words, people who are denying the Qur'ān should be fully aware that this Qur'ān is not the request of an implorer; the fact is that its sender is *عَزِيزٌ* ie. powerful and dominant, and this book itself is also *عَزِيزٌ*. For this reason, its status is that it must be obeyed at all cost; those who deny it should fully keep in mind that this Book will decide their fate in this world; here the established practice of God regarding His messengers should be kept in consideration which has been mentioned at many places in this *tafsīr*.

Another meaning of the word *عَزِيزٌ* is “inaccessible”. The succeeding verse explains this word further. Here, this much should be kept in mind that however much an effort the devils from among men and jinn may make, they are not able to adulterate this Book in any way. Evil can neither enter in it from behind it nor from in front from it. The Almighty has totally protected it from every intervention of the devils. In other words, this forms an answer to the detestable practice of the opponents mentioned in the following words earlier: *وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَا تَسْمَعُوا لِهَذَا وَآلَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَا تَسْمَعُوا لِهَذَا* (And the disbelievers said: “Pay no heed to this Qur'ān. Raise an uproar during its recital so that you may gain the upper hand.” (41:26))

Consider next the verse: *لَا يَأْتِيهِ الْبَاطِلُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَلَا مِنْ خَلْفِهِ تَنْزِيلٌ مِّنْ حَكِيمٍ حَمِيدٍ*. This is a comprehensive statement of the exaltedness and sublimity of the Qur'ān two aspects of which need special consideration:

Firstly, the Qur'ān is totally safe from in front of it and from behind it. The One Who has revealed it is God; the one who has brought it down is Gabriel and the one who has received it is Muḥammad (sws) and those who have acquired and transmitted are the most noble and righteous souls. It is as if from the beginning to the end it is perfection personified. There is not a single fissure in it through which Satan can intervene in it: neither in its origin nor in its end.

Secondly, the Almighty Himself has arranged for the protection of the

Qur'ān as is evident from the words: وَ إِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ (١٥: ٩). This is a distinction of the Qur'ān in which it is unparalleled with regard to all previous scriptures. The responsibility of protection of the Torah and the Injīl was imposed on their recipients who were not able to discharge this responsibility; the result was that great interpolations crept in these scriptures, and it became difficult to distinguish the right from the wrong in them. However, God Himself has taken up the responsibility of protecting the Qur'ān, and has safeguarded it from any addition till the Day of Judgement.

There are many aspects of this protection.

First, during the time of revelation of the Qur'ān the Almighty made arrangements that the devils are unable to interfere in the process of divine revelation in any way. Although there is a permanent arrangement to prevent the devils from eavesdropping and listening to divine matters we have explained in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah Jinn that during the time of the revelation of the Qur'ān, special arrangements were made in preventing devils from meddling in revelations in any way so that nothing is able to enter the Qur'an from in front of it (مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ).

Second, the angel which the Almighty selected to reveal the Qur'ān has been called by the Qur'ān (81:20-21) as “the one endued with power, held in honour before the Lord of the Throne, obeyed in Heavens, moreover trustworthy.” In other words, the angel is so powerful that evil spirits cannot overpower him; he is the head of all angels and he cannot forget anything. Whatever is entrusted to him by the Almighty, he fully protects. There is not a semblance of a chance that the slightest of change can take place in the revelation entrusted to him. He has a very high rank before the Almighty which shows that he is ahead of all other creatures as far as abilities are concerned – It is obvious that all this elaborate arrangement has been made to close the doors to any evil entering the Qur'ān from its very origin.

Third, the very person who was entrusted with the Qur'ān was firstly, the best of human beings in all respects and secondly, the responsibility of memorizing, arranging and safeguarding the Qur'ān was taken up by the Almighty: لَا تُحَرِّكْ بِهِ لِسَانَكَ لِتَعْجَلَ بِهِ إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا جَمْعَهُ وَقُرْآنَهُ فَإِذَا قَرَأْنَاهُ فَاتَّبِعْ قُرْآنَهُ (To acquire this Qur'ān [O Prophet!] Do not move your tongue hastily over it. Indeed, upon Us is its collection and recital. So when We have recited it, follow this recital [of Ours]. Then upon Us is to explain it [wherever need be], (75:16-19)). It is evident from various narratives that whatever text of the Qur'ān would be revealed the Prophet (sws) and his close Companions (rta) would memorize it. In every Ramaḍān, the Prophet (sws) would read it out to

Gabriel or listen from him so that no possibility of any error or omission should remain and this reading out or listening to would be according to the sequence the Almighty had arranged it. Also evident from certain narratives is that in the last Ramaḍān of his life, this mutual presentation of the Qur'ān took place twice. Then in this very arrangement and recital the whole of the Qur'ān was written down and later the rightly guided caliphs sent its copies to various cities. This elaborate treatment was not received by any of the previous scriptures and about the Torah no one knows when its constituent scriptures were assembled and who was responsible for this task.

Fourth, the Qur'ān is a miracle with regard to its eloquent selection of words and the meanings they convey. And so distinct is it in this aspect to other discourses that they cannot match it. So much so, the words of the Prophet (sws) himself – who was the recipient of the Qur'ān and the most eloquent among everyone – could not rival it. Thus there is no possibility that any extraneous addition be made into it. Consequently, works of people who have dared to answer the challenge of the Qur'ān to bring something similar to it are preserved in history and literature. If a person compares them with the Qur'ān, he will notice the same difference between them as between a pearl and a pebble. In this manner, it is as if the doors to any adulteration from the rear too (مِنْ خَلْفِهِ) have been closed.

Fifth, together with the promise of protecting the Qur'ān, the Almighty has also promised to protect and safeguard its language till the Day of Judgement. Because of the fact that the languages of some divine scriptures became extinct a lot of changes and interpolations were introduced by way of translations and we have no clue about them now. However, the real language of the Qur'ān is safe and sound and will remain so till the Day of Judgement. Hence there is no possibility of any evil creeping into it by way of translations and commentaries. If anyone tries to introduce some evil in it, men of learning can easily sift it out by testing it against the original text.

I have referred to just a few prominent aspects; there are some other aspects as well; however, this is an independent subject; it is not possible for me to go into more details here. From these aspects, readers can grasp how the Qur'ān possesses this majesty that evil cannot enter from behind it or from in front of it.

Consider next the part: تَنْزِيلٌ مِّنْ حَكِيمٍ حَمِيدٍ. I have explained the word تَنْزِيلٌ at a number of places in this *tafsīr* that the meaning of thoroughness and gradual progression is found in it. Hence these words would mean that it is a book revealed in a thorough manner by the God

who is Ḥakīm and Ḥamīd. These two are from among the attributes of God. The first of these attributes refers to the fact that He is a being every act and practice of whom has wisdom in it. Hence He has revealed this Book full of wisdom with great thoroughness. The second of these attributes refers to the fact that He is praiseworthy, has worthy attributes and is the fountainhead of all acts which are praiseworthy. Thus He has blessed His creatures with this great favour out of His grace and magnanimity. The previous verse refers to the attribute of ‘Azīz which encompasses warning and threat in it. This verse refers to the attributes of Ḥakīm and Ḥamīd which encompasses exhortation in it.

مَا يُقَالُ لَكَ إِلَّا مَا قَدْ قِيلَ لِلرُّسُلِ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَذُو مَغْفِرَةٍ وَذُو عِقَابٍ أَلِيمٍ (٤٣)³⁹

This verse sounds assurance to the Prophet Muḥammad (sws): he should not think that it is only his nation who has adopted such an attitude with him; in fact, whatever is being said to him was also said to the messengers of earlier nations by their respective miscreants. This is a common tradition of the messengers and their nations. In other words, it is not because of some shortcoming of the Prophet (sws) that the miscreants of his nation have become his enemies; this has always happened with the messengers of God; so just as other steadfast messengers showed perseverance on the harm inflicted on them by their nations, the Prophet (sws) should also show perseverance.

The words *إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَذُو مَغْفِرَةٍ وَذُو عِقَابٍ أَلِيمٍ* imply that the Prophet (sws) should rest assured that there may be delay in the scheme of God but it does materialize: if in spite of the excesses committed by these people the Almighty has granted them respite, then this does not mean that there is no law of reward and punishment in His eyes; He is greatly forgiving and also inflicts a painful punishment; He gives respite till the very end so that those who are able to become worthy of forgiveness are provided with this opportunity; however, when people do not benefit from this opportunity or wrongly benefit from it, then He punishes them in such a painful way that is not surpassed by anyone.

وَلَوْ جَعَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا أَعْجَمِيًّا لَقَالُوا لَوْلَا فُصِّلَتْ آيَاتُهُ أَأَعْجَمِيٌّ وَعَرَبِيٌّ قُلْ هُوَ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا هُدًى وَشِفَاءَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ فِي آذَانِهِمْ وَقْرٌ وَهُوَ عَلَيْهِمْ عَمًى أُولَٰئِكَ يُنَادَوْنَ مِنْ مَّكَانٍ

39. Nothing is being said to you that was not said to other prophets before you. Indeed, your Lord is greatly forgiving as well as very stern in retribution.

Some of the excuses which the opponents would concoct to show indifference to the Qur'ān are cited in this verse and then their baselessness is shown. It is evident from contextual indications that these and some others were implanted by the Jews in the minds of the Ishmaelites to deprive them of the favour of the Qur'ān; however, being unaware of their jealousy and contrivances, the naïve leaders of the Quraysh would cite such objections suggested to them by the Jews merely because of their animosity for the Prophet (sws). A number of objections taught to them by the Jews and which they as a result had adopted have been mentioned in the previous *sūrahs* and in the succeeding *sūrahs* too they are taken up. One of these objections was that till that time the specific language of divine revelation had remained Hebrew – in which all the scriptures had been revealed which were regarded as divine by the Qur'ān; so why has the Almighty now changed His language and why is the new revelation now in Arabic?

The Qur'ān has answered this objection by saying that it is an objection for the sake of it and a mere excuse to oppose the Qur'ān. If this Qur'ān had been revealed in a non-Arabic tongue, these very people would have objected that why were not these verses fully explained to them in their own tongue; however, now that the Almighty has revealed it in Arabic and fully explained its verses, instead of showing gratitude to God for this favour and blessing they have taken up the objection implanted in their minds by their own enemies. They object that why has God violated His tradition by revealing this Book in Arabic. In other words, this great favour of the Almighty has become a reason for their objection!

The words **أَعْجَمِي وَعَرَبِي** are a part of their objection. Had it been revealed the way they wanted it to be they would have objected that the language is non-Arabic and the addressees are Arabs implying how inappropriate and ill-suited this arrangement is that those who are its foremost addressees are absolutely unaware of its language.

The words **قُلْ هُوَ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا هُدًى وَشَفَاء** express the fact that the Prophet (sws) should tell these people that this favour is for those who give due

40. And had We revealed the Qur'an in a foreign tongue, these people would have objected: "Why were not its verses expounded?" The discourse in a foreign tongue, and the addressees Arabian?" Tell them: "It is a guide and a cure for those who profess faith in it." As for those who are not professing faith, there is deafness in their ears and this is a like a covering for them. Now these people will be called from a far-off place.'

regard and importance to it. Those who do not want to believe in it will somehow find one way or the other to oppose it; however, those who have a desire for guidance in them and those who are aware of their intellectual and spiritual maladies will find guidance in it as well as the remedy for their sorrows.

The words *وَالَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ فِي آذَانِهِمْ وَقُرْ وَهُوَ عَلَيْهِمْ عَمًى* delineate the fact that the reason that some people are not professing faith in this Book is not that there is some defect in this Book because of which it is not appealing to the hearts of these people; the truth is that the ears of their hearts are deaf and have lost the ability to accept the truth. For this reason the calls of the Qur'ān are not affecting their hearts and are in fact bouncing back from their ears.

The words *وَهُوَ عَلَيْهِمْ عَمًى* refer to the fact that the reason that some people are not being guided by this Book is not that it does not contain the light of guidance for them; the truth is that this light has dazed their eyes because of which instead of providing guidance it has become a means of their blindness. The implied meaning is that these people had made their eyes desirous of darkness instead of light; hence when divine light descended on them, their eyes could not withstand its brightness; in fact, whatever light that remained in them also went away. In order to fully appreciate this verse, readers are advised to study what I have written while explaining verse twenty of Sūrah Baqarah

The words *أُولَٰئِكَ يُنَادُونَكَ مِنْ مَّكَانٍ بَعِيدٍ* allude to the fact that now they are being called from a nearby place: the messenger of God is ardently following them to deliver them the Book of God and His message; however, because of their arrogance they have turned a deaf ear to him; they hear nothing; however, they must remember that soon a time will come when the summoner of the Day of Judgement will call them from a far off place, and they will run towards him as soon as they hear his call; they will dare not make any delay nor deviate from his call. In Sūrah Ṭāha, this subject is discussed in the following words: *يَوْمَئِذٍ يَتَّبِعُونَ الدَّاعِيَ لَا عِوَجَ لَهُ وَخَشَعَتِ الْأَصْوَاتُ لِلرَّحْمَنِ فَلَا تَسْمَعُ إِلَّا هَمْسًا (٢٠: ١٠٨)* (The day when they will run after the summoner; they will not be able to even slightly deviate from him; and the voices of all shall be humbled before the merciful Lord; hence you will hear nothing but whispers, (20:108)).

In order to fully understand the verse under discussion, readers may take another look at the explanation of the first five verses – in particular verse five of this *sūrah*: *وَقَالُوا قُلُوبُنَا فِي أَكْتَةٍ مِمَّا تَدْعُونَا إِلَيْهِ وَفِي آذَانِنَا وَقْرٌ وَمِنْ بَيْنِنَا وَبَيْنِكَ حِجَابٌ*. The arrogant would conceitedly remark that their hearts are obstructed from the calls of the Prophet (sws) and that their ears are deaf and there is a barrier between them and the Prophet (sws); the Qur'ān

has in fact corroborated each and every thing they have uttered and at the same time explained the nature of their deafness, blindness and barrier and on which day will these maladies of theirs be treated and the way this treatment will take place.

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ فَاخْتَلَفَ فِيهِ وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَبِّكَ لَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ
وَإِنَّهُمْ لَفِي شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ مُرِيبٍ (٤٥)⁴¹

This exact verse is also found in Sūrah Hūd (see: verse 111). I have already explained it there. This verse also answers an objection as the earlier verse did. The Jews would teach this objection to people that what is the need of a new Book when the Torah which is also God's Book is already present and the Qur'ān also acknowledges it as a Book from God? The Qur'ān has answered this question from various aspects which is cited in various *sūrahs*; here the answer given is that it is an established fact that the Almighty gave the Torah to Moses (sws); however, this is also an established fact that differences and discrepancies were created in it. The words *فَاخْتَلَفَ فِيهِ* refer to discrepancies which are found in very blatant form in the various Books of the Torah. If there exists mere difference in interpretation in something, then this can be resolved by consulting the original text, parallels and precedence; however, when there exists an open discrepancy and contradiction in the original, then these differences cannot be resolved. Thus it is a fact that a single subject has been mentioned in the various portions of the Torah in so many contradictory ways that it becomes difficult in fact impossible to reach the actual. I have cited many examples of these contradictions in the Torah in this *tafsīr*. Here I will just allude to one of these contradictions: the ones found regarding the predictions of the advent of Muḥammad (sws). Had the Jews not created these contradictions by interpolations in the Torah, they would have very easily understood why the Almighty revealed the Qur'ān after the Torah and after Moses (sws) what was the void in religion that needed to be fulfilled that necessitated the advent of Muḥammad (sws). But the Jews out of their wretchedness tried to hide this reality and in this manner they not only led themselves astray but also were instrumental in leading many others astray.

41. And We also gave the Book to Moses, but differences were created in it. And had for a word from your Lord not been decreed earlier, the matter would have been decided between them and these people are in a confusing doubt from it.

I have already alluded to earlier that these contradictions arose in the Torah because like the Qur'ān it was not divinely preserved. Many a time calamities befell it and the whole of the Torah became extinct. Later those who re-compiled did so merely from their memory. It is also not known who these compilers were and what were their traits. Some of the Books of the Torah were kept in total secrecy; no one except a select few knew their contents because they contained things which Jewish scholars did not like others to read because of their vested interest. Such things were even altered by them and they were successful too in this alteration. The creation of contradictions in such a Book is not amazing at all and the obvious result of these contradictions is that the truth is totally lost and the people once again are engulfed in the darkness – the very darkness to take people out from which divine light was revealed – and such differences are created between people that there is no means left to resolve them.

The words وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَبِّكَ لَفُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ are a very severe threat and since this objection, as alluded to earlier, was taught by the Jews, the words of this threat are sounded by referring to these Jews. The implied meaning is that the Jews even now regard themselves to be the recipients of the Torah and conceitedly think that the religious and political leadership they had acquired because of the Torah still lies with them and no one can challenge it. The fact is that because of their injustice to the Book of God they deserve that the court of God decide their fate by punishing them but the Almighty has fixed a day for deciding the date of each nation. For this reason, they have been granted respite; however, this respite nevertheless is a respite which will end one day and they will taste the punishment of this oppression.

The words وَإِنَّهُمْ لَفِي شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ مُرِيبٍ refer to the consequence of the differences and discrepancies created in the Torah. Obviously, the result was that everything written in the Torah became doubtful in the eyes of its recipients and because of this it became impossible to distinguish between good and evil. Several sects were born among them. Each sect adopted whatever it considered in accordance to its desire and the real religion was lost in these discrepancies. In the opinion of Imām Rāzī the antecedent of the pronoun in مِّنْهُ is the Qur'ān;⁴² however, in my opinion, it is the Torah and the aspect from which it became doubtful is the one just discussed.

This subject will be discussed in Sūrah Shūrā ahead. There some of its

42. Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn 'Umar al-Rāzī, *Al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, 1st ed., vol. 27 (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-'ilmiyyah, 2000), 116.

concise aspects will be further explained. In Sūrah Shūrā, this subject is discussed thus:

وَمَا تَفَرَّقُوا إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَعِيًّا بَيْنَهُمْ وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَبِّكَ إِلَى
أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى لَفُضِّي بَيْنَهُمْ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ أُورِثُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ لَفِي شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ مُرِيبٍ
(٤٢:١٤)

And these people divided themselves merely because of mutual obduracy only after true knowledge had come to them. And had not a thing been ascertained by God till an appointed term, He would have immediately decided among them. And those who have been made the inheritors of the Book after them are inflicted with a baffling doubt. (42:14)

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ أَسَاءَ فَعَلَيْهَا وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِظَلَّامٍ لِلْعَبِيدِ (٤٦:٤٣)

This is an expression of indifference to people: neither is the piety of a person of any benefit to God nor can any sin of a person harm him; he who does a pious deed will only himself benefit from it and he who does an evil deed will alone face its consequences. God is not unjust to His people in the slightest way. He will bring forth the results of their deeds in accordance with the nature of these deeds. In other words, the immense effort and enthusiasm on the part of God and His Prophet to show the right path to the people should not be a cause of deception for anyone; they should not think that God is not able to accomplish some of His tasks until people are rightly guided. The fact is that all this enthusiasm and vigour is for the betterment of the people. God does not want that people be seized by Him if the truth has not been conclusively conveyed to them. In verse fifteen of Sūrah Jāthiyah as well this subject is discussed in the same context.

I have already explained this principle of the Arabic language that when there is a negation of an exaggeration, then its purpose is to create exaggeration in the negation itself. For this reason the expression would mean: "You Lord is not unjust to his people in the slightest sense."

43. He who does good does it for his own soul; and he who commits evil will face its consequences and your Lord is never the slightest unjust to His servants.

Section V: Verses (47-54)

Coming up are the closing verses of the *sūrah*. In them, first those people are warned who had no fear for the looming punishment or for the Day of Judgement because they were not being informed of the exact time of its arrival. They are told that denying a fact merely because its time of arrival cannot be divulged is no prudence. There are so many near at hand realities which no sane person merely denies because its time of advent is not known to anyone.

After this sorrow is expressed at people who were asking to hasten the time of arrival of the promised punishment; such is the meanness of these people that though God out of His grace has given them respite to repent and mend their ways, they think that this is mere bluff; they are demanding the punishment to visit them; whereas if they are seized now by God in any way they will not get tired of making long invocations and pleadings.

In the end, these people are warned of the heinous fate of denying the Qur'ān. They are also told that if the various arguments proffered to substantiate its veracity are not enough, then soon signs of its veracity will appear in the world around them and in that within them which no one will dare negate.

Readers may proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

إِلَيْهِ يُرَدُّ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ وَمَا تَخْرُجُ مِنْ ثَمَرَاتٍ مِّنْ أَكْثَامِهَا وَمَا تَحْمِلُ مِنْ أُنْثَىٰ وَلَا تَضَعُ
إِلَّا بِعِلْمِهِ وَيَوْمَ يُنَادِيهِمْ أَيْنَ شُرَكَائِيَ قَالُوا أَدْنَاكَ مَا مِنَّا مِنْ شَهِيدٍ (٤٧) وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَا
كَانُوا يَدْعُونَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَظَنُّوا مَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ حَاجٍ (٤٨) لَا يَسْأَلُ الْإِنْسَانُ مِنْ دُعَاءِ الْخَيْرِ
وَإِن مَّسَّهُ الشَّرُّ فَيَئُوسٌ قَنُوطٌ (٤٩) وَلَئِن أَدْفَنَاهُ رَحْمَةً مِنَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ ضَرَاءٍ مَّسَّهُ لَيَقُولَنَّ
هَذَا لِي وَمَا أَطَّلْتُ السَّاعَةَ فَاثِمَةً وَلَئِن رُّجِعْتُ إِلَىٰ رَبِّي إِنَّ لِي عِنْدَهُ لِلْحُسْنَىٰ فَلَنُنَبِّئَنَّ الَّذِينَ
كَفَرُوا بِمَا عَمِلُوا وَلَنُذِيقَنَّهُمْ مِّنْ عَذَابٍ غَلِيظٍ (٥٠) وَإِذَا أَنْعَمْنَا عَلَى الْإِنْسَانِ أَعْرَضَ
وَنَأَىٰ بِجَانِبِهِ وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ فَذُو دُعَاءٍ عَرِيضٍ (٥١) قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ
كَفَرْتُمْ بِهِ مَنْ أَضَلُّ مِمَّنْ هُوَ فِي شِقَاقٍ بَعِيدٍ (٥٢) سُرِّيهِمْ آيَاتِنَا فِي الْأَفَاقِ وَفِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ
حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ أَوَلَمْ يَكْفِ بِرَبِّكَ أَنَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ (٥٣) أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ فِي

مِرْيَةٍ مِّن لِّقَاءِ رَبِّهِمْ أَلَا إِنَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُّحِيطٌ (٥٤)

And God alone has knowledge of the Hour of Doom. No fruit comes out of its shell and no female conceives or gives birth, but with His knowledge. And the day He will call out to them: “Where are those fellow-gods of Mine?” They will reply: “We have submitted to you that none of us can bear testimony to this.” And the idols which they invoked earlier will vanish from them and they shall learn that there is no escape. (47-48)

And man never gets tired of praying for good things. But when some calamity befalls him he loses hope and grows despondent. And if after they have been afflicted with a calamity We make him taste Our mercy, he says: “This is my right and I do not think the Hour of Doom will ever come. And ever if am returned to my Lord, He will surely reward me well.” Thus We shall definitely inform disbelievers of their deeds and make them taste a grievous scourge. (49-50)

And when We show favour to man, he turns his back and holds aloof; but when some harm befalls him he starts offering long pleadings. (51)

Tell them: “Speak up, if this Qur’an is from God and you deny it, then who can err more than the person who has gone far in opposition?” (52)

We will show them Our signs in the world all around them and [that] in them until they clearly see that this Qur’ān is the truth. And does it not suffice that your Lord is the witness of all things? Beware these people doubt that they will ever meet their Lord. Beware, He encompasses all things. (53-54)

Explanation

إِلَيْهِ يُرَدُّ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ وَمَا تَخْرُجُ مِنْ ثَمَرَاتٍ مِّنْ أَكْمَامِهَا وَمَا تَحْمِلُ مِنْ أُنْثَىٰ وَلَا تَضَعُ إِلَّا بِعِلْمِهِ وَيَوْمَ يُنَادِيهِمْ أَيْنَ شُرَكَائِيَ قَالُوا أَدْنَاكَ مَا مِنَّا مِنْ شَهِيدٍ (٤٧)

This verse answers the objection of people who in response to the warnings of the Hereafter sounded to them would mockingly say: “When will it come? Why is it not coming if it is supposed to come? When will this ship which has set sail come to port?” Such people who make fun of these warnings are answered at various places in the Qur’ān by informing them that the advent of the Hereafter is a certainty. It is an

44. And God alone has knowledge of the Hour of Doom. No fruit comes out of its shell and no female conceives or gives birth, but with His knowledge. And the day He will call out to them: “Where are those fellow-gods of Mine?” They will reply: “We have submitted to you that none of us can bear testimony to this.”

obvious consequence of this universe and the attribute of its Creator. The world within man and that outside him bear witness to it; hence it shall definitely come; as for the question about the exact time of its arrival is concerned, this is known to God only; He alone has knowledge of this; no other person is aware of this secret.

The words وَمَا تَخْرُجُ مِنْ ثَمَرَاتٍ مِّنْ أَكْثَامِهَا وَمَا تَحْمِلُ مِنْ أُنْثَى وَلَا تَضَعُ إِلَّا بِعِلْمِهِ refer to the fact that it is not only this secret which is known only to God, there are many near at hand facts known to Him alone. Man's knowledge regarding them is very limited but in spite of this no sane person denies them. A spike of wheat sprouts; no one knows whether it will grow and become ripe and if it will how many of its seeds will be defective and how many of them will be without defect; how many of them will remain protected; what exactly is the date when they will become ripe and how many of them will ultimately come in the possession of the farmer and how many of them will be devoured away by animals and birds. All these facts are known to God alone; hence if man is not aware of the exact time of arrival of the Hereafter, then this is nothing strange; The Hereafter is a great happening; man does not have exact knowledge of many things which he observes everyday.

The expression وَمَا تَحْمِلُ مِنْ أُنْثَى alludes to the fact that no one knows if a pregnant lady will deliver a boy or a girl; whether the delivered offspring would be a normal human being or would have some handicap; whether the offspring will be born alive or born dead and what would be the date and time of this delivery? The exact knowledge of all these things is known to God alone. If man has such limited knowledge of such a common phenomenon, then how is it strange that if he does not have knowledge of the time of arrival of the Day of Judgement or if he is not informed about it. However, if he could have claimed that he does have knowledge of all the rest of the things and it is only this particular thing which he has no knowledge of, it would have been perfectly right for him to doubt or deny it on this basis. This topic is discussed at another place in the following words:

رَبُّ اللَّهِ عِنْدَهُ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ وَيُنَزِّلُ الْغَيْثَ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْأَرْحَامِ وَمَا تَدْرِي نَفْسٌ
مَّاذَا تَكْسِبُ غَدًا وَمَا تَدْرِي نَفْسٌ بِأَيِّ أَرْضٍ تَمُوتُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ (٣١: ٢٤)

Indeed with God alone is the knowledge of the Hour. And it is He Who sends down rain, and knows whatever is in the wombs. And no soul knows what it will earn tomorrow, and no one knows in what land he will die. Indeed, God alone is the All-Knower, All-Aware.

(31:24)

The words وَيَوْمَ يُنَادِيهِمْ أَيْنَ شُرَكَائِيَ قَالُوا أَدْنَاكَ مَا مِنَّا مِنْ شَهِيدٍ imply that if these people are showing indifference to the Hereafter on the basis of their alleged deities, then they should remember that when on that Day the Almighty will ask them to call forth their deities to save them from His grasp they will confess that these deities are not partners of God. In the previous *sūrah*, this subject was discussed in the following words:

ثُمَّ قِيلَ لَهُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ تُشْرِكُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ قَالُوا ضَلُّوا عَنَّا بَلْ لَمْ نَكُنْ نَدْعُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ شَيْئًا كَذَلِكَ يَضِلُّ اللَّهُ الْكَافِرِينَ (٧٤-٧٣: ٤٠)

Then they will be asked: “Where are those whom you associated with God?” They will reply: “They have forsaken us; in fact, we have never been worshipping anything.” In this way, God will make the disbelievers lose their senses. (40:73-74)

The implication is that at the very first call to bring forth their deities, these people will come out of their inebriation and confess their mistake.

Some people regard the words أَدْنَاكَ مَا مِنَّا مِنْ شَهِيدٍ (We say to you that none of us is a witness to this) to be a statement from their alleged deities. This would mean that when the Almighty will demand from the Idolaters to bring forth the deities they associated with God, then the prophets or angels whom they worshipped would take the initiative in absolving themselves by saying that none of them is prepared to become a witness that anyone is God’s partner. This interpretation is perhaps adopted on the basis of the following verse:

وَيَوْمَ يُحْشَرُهُمْ وَمَا يَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَيَقُولُ أَأَنْتُمْ أَضَلَلْتُمْ عِبَادِي هَؤُلَاءِ أَمْ هُمْ ضَلُّوا السَّبِيلَ قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ مَا كَانَ يَنْبَغِي لَنَا أَنْ نَتَّخِذَ مِنْ دُونِكَ مِنْ أَوْلِيَاءَ وَلَكِنْ مَتَّعْتَهُمْ وَآبَاءَهُمْ حَتَّى نَسُوا الذِّكْرَ وَكَانُوا قَوْمًا بُورًا (٢٥: ١٧-١٨)

And on the Day when God will gather them together with those whom they had been worshipping besides Him. Thus He will ask them: “Was it you who misled these servants of Mine or did they themselves strayed in error?” They will reply: “Glory be to You! We had no right to make anyone as Protector besides You, but what happened was that You gave them and their fore-fathers worldly comfort till they forgot Your reminder and became doomed.” (25:17-

18)

If the first interpretation is adopted, then the word **آذَنَّاكَ** is tantamount to a declaration of acquittal. In other words, it would be a blatant confession of their sin by the Idolaters and an expression of seeking God's mercy to forgive them.

If the second interpretation is adopted, then the meaning of the verse would be that in response to what God said to them they would reply what is stated in the above quoted verses of Sūrah Furqān (25:17-18). However, when these Idolaters who worshiped these deities would be asked from God to bring forth these associates they had set up with God, these deities thinking they are being called will give reference to what they would have said before and which is cited in the quoted verses of Sūrah Furqān (25:17-18).

وَصَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَدْعُونَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَظَنُّوا مَا لَهُمْ مِنَ مَحْيَصٍ (٤٨)⁴⁵

Whether the worshippers will make a proclamation of acquittal from their deities or vice versa, in both cases the Idolaters are set to be doomed. This is because those on whose basis they had shown indifference to the Hereafter will not be there to save them. They would then be certain that they cannot escape God's punishment.

I have already explained the word **ظَنَّ** at an appropriate place in this *tafsīr*. I have attempted to explain there that this word connotes certainty at instances in which the purpose is to state a fact of the future which cannot be observed yet it is a certain fact in the opinion of the speaker. An example of this can be seen in the following verse: **إِنِّي ظَنَنْتُ أَنِّي مُلَاقٍ حِسَابِيهِ** (I was certain that I shall have to face my reckoning, (69:20)).

لَا يَسْأَلُ الْإِنْسَانُ مِنْ دُعَاءِ الْخَيْرِ وَإِنْ مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ فَيَئُوسٌ قَنُوطٌ (٤٩)⁴⁶

Though a general word **إِنْسَانٌ** (man) is used, it refers to the disbelievers who were asking the Prophet (sws) to hasten the arrival of the Day of Judgement. They would mockingly inquire about the delay in its coming if it is certain to come. Instead of addressing them or giving their explicit

45. And the idols which they invoked earlier will vanish from them and they shall learn that there is no escape.

46. And man never gets tired of praying for good things. But when some calamity befalls him he loses hope and grows despondent.

reference what is said is said in a general way so that aversion is also expressed to them and what is said assumes the form of a principle.

The verse says that man is a strange creature: if he is blessed with affluence and riches, then instead of being grateful he challenges God and asks Him to hasten the punishment; if he is even slightly seized by God, he starts making long invocations to be shown mercy and pledges that if he is relieved of his suffering he will become eternally grateful to God and become His obedient servant. However, this is mere deception on his part for as soon as God delivers him from his suffering he fully reverts to his original state of ingratitude. If God does not relieve him of his troubles or if his hardships prolongs, then instead of showing content on the verdict of God and being patient he starts to despair and loses hope in God.

Generally people have interpreted this verse to mean that such people very enthusiastically supplicate before God to grant them worldly success and progress. To them, the expression *دُعَاءُ الْخَيْرِ* refers to supplicating for worldly successes. However this is against general observation and practice. Such people never turn to God if they are sailing smoothly in life. In fact they are engrossed in their objectives and infatuated with their own desires. However, when they are faced with hardships, they turn to God and start making long invocations to Him and also request others to plead before God for them. If their affliction ends, they forget God and regard this to be a result of their own planning or of their own good fortune. If the affliction extends a little, they end up in frustration and feel defeated.

This subject is discussed in the Qur'ān at various places. For example, in Sūrah Luqman, the words are:

وَإِذَا غَشِيَهُمْ مَوَجٌّ كَالظُّلُلِ دَعَوْا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ فَلَمَّا نَجَّاهُمْ إِلَى الْبَرِّ فَمِنْهُمْ مُقْتَصِدٌ وَمَا يَجْحَدُ بِآيَاتِنَا إِلَّا كُلُّ خَتَّارٍ كَفُورٍ (٣١: ٣٢)

And when waves like canopies cover them, they invoke God pledging their pure obedience to Him alone. So when He brings them safe to land, there are few among them who stop in the middle, [and many who break their promises]. But none denies Our signs except every perfidious ungrateful. (31:32)

In Sūrah Yūnus, the words are:

وَإِذَا مَسَّ الْإِنْسَانَ الضُّرُّ دَعَانَا لِجَنبِهِ أَوْ قَاعِدًا أَوْ قَائِمًا فَلَمَّا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُ ضُرَّهُ مَرَّ

كَأَن لَّمْ يَدْعُنَا إِلَى ضَرْمَسِهِ كَذَلِكَ زَيْنَ لِلْمُسْرِفِينَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (١٠: ١٢)

And when man is afflicted with some sorrow, he invokes Us, lying down or sitting or standing. But as soon as We take away this sorrow he walks away as if he had never invoked Us for a remedy to any sorrow of his. (10:12)

At another place in Sūrah Yūnus, it is similarly said:

هُوَ الَّذِي يُسَيِّرُكُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا كُنْتُمْ فِي الْفُلْكِ وَجَرَيْنَ بِهِم بِرِيحٍ طَيِّبَةٍ وَفَرِحُوا بِهَا جَاءَتْهَا رِيحٌ عَاصِفٌ وَجَاءَهُمُ الْمَوْجُ مِنْ كُلِّ مَكَانٍ وَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُمْ أُحِيطَ بِهِمْ دَعَوُا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ لَئِنْ أَنجَيْتَنَا مِنْ هَذِهِ لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ فَلَمَّا أَنجَاهُمْ إِذَا هُمْ يَبْغُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ (١٠: ٢٢-٢٣)

He it is Who enables you to travel through land and sea, till when you are in the ships and they sail with them with a favourable wind, and they are engrossed therein, then comes a stormy wind from some direction and the waves come to them from all sides, and they think that they shall be killed, they invoke Allah, promising their obedience, saying: "If You deliver us from this destruction, we shall truly become grateful to you." But when He delivered them, they spread anarchy in the land without any basis. (10:22-23)

In the light of these parallel verses, the verse under discussion in my opinion would mean that when such people are afflicted with some trial, they never get tired of beseeching God. Thus verse 51 ahead also explains this: (وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ فَدَّوْا دُعَاءَ غَرِيضٍ (٤١: ٥١) and when some sorrow befalls them, he takes to long invocations, (41:51)).

The words وَإِنْ مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ فَيُؤْوِسُ قَنُوطُ imply that in the first phase of his suffering he goes about making long pleadings before God, but when he sees that his pleadings are not producing results, he ends up frustrated and discouraged after losing hope in God's mercy.

The implication is that such people forget God when they are in comfort and ease and remember Him only when they are in distress; in this situation too, as soon as they are relieved of their distress they forget God once again and if it does not seem to go away they lose hope in Him. Both these cases reflect disbelief and ingratitude. The character of a true God-fearing person is that in case of comfort and ease he is grateful to God, and when some trial comes his way he faces it with patience and is desirous of God's mercy. In other words, he is a person

who neither becomes conceited because of being blessed with ease and comfort nor becomes dejected, desperate and gloomy in hardships; on the contrary, he is pleased and satisfied with God's decisions. This is the real majesty of faith and trust in God and it is such people who acquire a contented soul and a state in which God is pleased with them and they with God.

وَلَيْنَ أَذَقْنَاهُ رَحْمَةً مِنَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ ضَرَاءٍ مَسَّتْهُ لَيَقُولَنَّ هَذَا لِي وَمَا أَظُنُّ السَّاعَةَ قَائِمَةً وَلَئِنْ رُجِعْتُ إِلَىٰ رَبِّي إِنَّ لِي عِنْدَهُ لِلْحُسْنَىٰ فَلَنُنَبِّئَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِمَا عَمِلُوا وَلَنُذِيقَنَّهُمْ مِّنْ عَذَابٍ غَلِيظٍ ⁴⁷(٥٠)

The verse implies that if he is not delivered from the suffering he had prayed to be rid of he loses hope in God's mercy as is indicated in the previous verse. But if the Almighty blesses him with His grace and alleviates his suffering, then instead of being grateful to God he conceitedly thinks that this was his right; that he has been created with such high status and would live his life in this manner; no one can deprive him of this nor is there any need for him to be thankful to anyone for this He further contends that as for the Day of Judgement about which some people are warning him of, in the first place, it is quite improbable that it will come; however, if it does come and he has to face God, then he will be granted a high status there and will enjoy luxuries and comforts there as well just as he did in the previous world.

It needs to be kept in consideration that it is not necessary that all these statements be made by such people with their tongue (even though many of them say so with shameful courage); it is enough that such thoughts exist in the minds. The Qur'an has called even these mental thoughts as قول (statement) because one's attitude best reflects one's inner-self.

The words لِّلْحُسْنَىٰ فَلَنُنَبِّئَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِمَا عَمِلُوا وَلَنُذِيقَنَّهُمْ مِّنْ عَذَابٍ غَلِيظٍ very sternly warn these people who were living in a fool's paradise. The implication is that these foolish people are dreaming that just as they are blessed with abiding comfort and luxury in this world, they will have this in the next world as well if ever it comes; they should bear in mind that the next world is bound to come and that the Almighty will

47. And if after they have been afflicted with a calamity We make him taste Our mercy, he says: "This is my right and I do not think the Hour of Doom will ever come. And ever if am returned to my Lord, He will surely reward me well." Thus We shall definitely inform disbelievers of their deeds and make them taste a grievous scourge.

definitely inform these disbelievers of their deeds. Informing them of their deeds in other words means that they will be visited by a grievous punishment – as is explained by the last words: وَلَنُذِيقَنَّهُمْ مِّنْ عَذَابٍ غَلِيظٍ (We shall make them taste a grievous punishment).

وَإِذَا أَنْعَمْنَا عَلَى الْإِنْسَانِ أَعْرَضَ وَنَأَىٰ بِجَانِبِهِ وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ فَدُوًّا دُعَاءٍ عَرِيضٍ (٥١)⁴⁸

The expression نَأَىٰ بِجَانِبِهِ imply what is implied at other instances by idioms such as فَتَوَلَّىٰ بِرُكْنِهِ (٥١: ٣٩) and ثَأْنِي عَظْفِهِ (٢٢: ٩). It signifies arrogantly turning away. The word جَانِبٌ means “side”. When a person arrogantly turns away, he bends his shoulders and turns his side and walks away. The expression نَأَىٰ بِجَانِبِهِ portrays this scene.

In the previous verse, one aspect of the character of such people (allusion is to the Quraysh and the arrogant leaders of Tā'if) is depicted. In this verse, another aspect of their character is referred to. It is said that when the Almighty blesses them with some favour they turn away from Him and walk away arrogantly; however, if He even slightly takes them to task, they start making long invocations. In other words, there is no basis of their arrogance. In one instance, they deviate from the right path and at another start to complain and whine.

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ كَانَ مِنَ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ كَفَرْتُمْ بِهِ مَنْ أَضَلُّ مِمَّنْ هُوَ فِي شِقَاقٍ بَعِيدٍ (٥٢)⁴⁹

This verse poses a question to these rejecters who were arrogantly denying the Qur'ān by hypothetically accepting their view: where will they go if this Book is from God? In this case, who will have strayed more in error than those who have gone far in their animosity and reached their place of doom – a place from which they cannot even return.

This verse actually invites these people to reflect with full sincerity on the Qur'ān and giving due importance to it before they form any opinion about it. The basis of this invitation is that the fate the Qur'ān is warning its rejecters and the arguments it is informing them of are not something that should be summarily dismissed or made fun of; in fact, through very convincing arguments it is informing them of a dreadful fate. Therefore, people who are obdurately rejecting it should not ignore the possibility of the veracity of its claim. If they think that there is such a possibility –

48. And when We show favour to man, he turns his back and holds aloof; but when some harm befalls him he starts offering long pleadings.

49. Tell them: “Speak up, if this Qur'an is from God and you deny it, then who can err more than the person who has gone far in opposition?”

and the most stubborn of people cannot negate this possibility – then prudence and far-sightedness demands that they reflect on the Qur’ān a hundred times and whatever decision they make, they should consider its far-off repercussions. If they adopt the Qur’ān, they will lose nothing in fact gain and gain everything. However, if in frenzy of their stubbornness and enmity they reject it, then this enmity will take them and throw them in a place from which no possibility of any return will remain. In other words, they should give this matter the importance it deserves. If they allow obduracy and self-centredness and jealousy and animosity to play their role, then this tussle will lead them to a grievous doom.

سُرِّيهِمْ آيَاتِنَا فِي الْأَفَاقِ وَفِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ أَوَلَمْ يَكْفِ بِرَبِّكَ أَنَّهُ
عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ (٥٣)⁵⁰

This verse sounds an assurance to the Prophet (sws) and warning to the rejecters of the Qur’ān. The implication is that if these people are not willing to accept the Qur’ān on the basis of arguments and are adamant to observe the signs of God as a proof of the Qur’ān’s veracity, then very soon the time will come when such signs will appear in Makkah and its whereabouts and in the Quraysh themselves that these people will cry out that the Qur’ān is an absolute truth.

The word “signs” in the opinion of this writer refers to the signs of dominance of the truth and of the destruction of falsehood predicted by the Qur’ān. This prediction is also mentioned earlier in this *sūrah* in the light of historical arguments. Initially, the leaders of the Quraysh regarded these to be tall claims of self-praise and made fun of them. However, when in Madīnah and in Makkah itself and its whereabouts and even among the noble souls of the Quraysh Islam started to take root, they and their supporters started to realize the truthfulness of these claims. Finally, after migration such incidents of Islam’s dominance ensued as caused the empires of Rome and Persia to submit to it, what to speak of the Quraysh. This subject is also discussed in Sūrah Naml in the following words: سَرِيكُمُ آيَاتِهِ فَتَعْرِفُونَهَا: (٢٧: ٩٣) (and He will show you His signs; thus you will recognize them, (27:93)).

The words أَوَلَمْ يَكْفِ بِرَبِّكَ أَنَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ refer to the fact that though the glad tidings of the truth being delivered to them relate to the

50. We will show them Our signs in the world all around them and [that] in them until they clearly see that this Qur’ān is the truth. And does it not suffice that your Lord is the witness of all things?

future, their Lord is aware of the past, the present and the future; hence they should rest assured that every one of these glad tidings will materialize true.

أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ فِي مِرْيَةٍ مِّن لِّقَاءِ رَبِّهِمْ أَلَا إِنَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُّحِيطٌ (٥٤)⁵¹

Here, at the end, the actual cause of spreading disorder by these rivals is referred to: their real malady is that they have doubts about being raised to life again and facing their Lord. This attitude has made them short-sighted in the matters of life and also very stern in their opposition to the truth. The Prophet (sws) is asked to fully inform them that God embraces everything. Nothing is beyond His jurisdiction. He will do whatever He wants and whenever He intends. Neither can anyone escape His grasp nor can anyone become an impediment for Him to realize any of His intentions.

By the grace of God, with these lines the *tafsīr* of this *sūrah* stands completed. فَلْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ عَلَىٰ ذَٰلِكَ (so gratitude be to God on this).

Raḥmānābād

24th October 1975 AD

8th Shawwal 1395 AH

51. Beware these people doubt that they will ever meet their Lord. Beware, He encompasses all things.